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FEATURE MYSTERY STORY

ONE CLUE MISSING

by CHARLES FULTON OURSLER

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See What Is Coming

OUR next number is going to be extremely interesting, as the material we have selected for it is of a very unusual kind. The feature story was written by Joe Burke, one of the most fascinating authors of detective fiction, and his novelette is entitled "The Doom of the Damned." It is a detective story with a powerful plot, strong characters and plenty of lively adventure. Do not miss this rare treat.

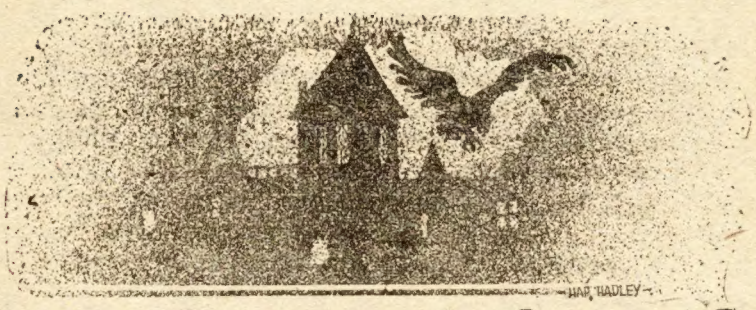
Edgar Daniel Kramer's remarkable two-part mystery story begins in No. 136 under the title "When a Man's Dead." The whole yarn hinges on the startling exploits of a man and a bag of gold. We have never before published a more interesting and mysterious story than this one and we urge you most emphatically to read it.

There is going to be a splendid collection of short stories for your entertainment. "The Unexpected Clue," by Gilbert Hammond, is a headquarters detective story dealing with the apprehension of a band of thieves. Another will be a crook story called "The Limit," written by Albert Chenicek; and there will be an ingenious fingerprint sketch entitled "Perfectly Obvious," of which James P. Hughes is the author. Be sure to read Gardner Hulett's railroad detective story "Whole Hog or None." It contains one of the most interesting plots ever written.

Besides the above-mentioned stories there will be some mighty fine sketches, a splendid special article relating to the police force, and a number of the usual brilliant short items written especially for this magazine by some of the most entertaining writers in the world.

We are pleased to notify our readers that we have secured a large number of first-class stories and special articles from authors whose work appears in all the leading papers and magazines, and they will be published in each succeeding issue of "Mystery." No amount of money or effort is being spared to give our readers the very best fact and fiction procurable. Do not fail to tell your friends what splendid detective stories we are issuing in this publication.

THE EDITOR.



ONE CLUE MISSING

by Charles Fulton Oursler

CHAPTER ONE

IN front of the Criterion Theatre at Forty-fourth street and Broadway Starr Coleman was standing in the greatest dejection.

There was a discouraged angle to the droop of the cigarette dangling from his lips. The rakish aspect of his green velour hat was somehow transformed to an abashed and defeated collapse.

Starr was slipping.

He had sensed the situation long before Langhammer, his chief, had spoken to him about it. Starr was the feature man on the scenario staff of the Multiplex Film Corporation, and Langhammer was its president. It was Starr's keen sense of the dramatic, his unfailing pulse for heart interest, his uncanny ability to put tears and laughter and suspense into a moving picture which had helped Langhammer to become a millionaire.

Incidentally Starr did not fare any too badly himself. His salary was so large that he had to give several thousand dollars to the government on or before the fifteenth of every March. In the moving picture world he was regarded as a genius.

But now he was slipping.

Langhammer had been too much in earnest to be polite about it. He had called in Starr, and without the preliminary of even a gruff good-morning he said:

"You're getting stale, Coleman. I don't mind saying that you're rotten. Those last two scenarios are punk. Now you've done good work. Your 'Courtship of the Cabaret Girl' was a knock-out. So was 'The Purple Flame!' But these last two pictures! My God! What's the matter with you!"

Of course Star had essayed some kind of a defense, but it wasn't convincing. The trouble was that Starr knew Langhammer was right.

He *was* slipping.

In the ten years that he had been in the business—ever since he had served as a continuity writer with Paul M. Bryan in the old Gaumont days out at the Long Island studio—Starr had had one unfailing source of sympathy, aid and comfort when he was troubled. And now, as he stood gloomily at one of the facets of the Times Square Diamond, he decided to turn to that old reliable source of advice again.

He went home and told his wife all about it.

Now Alice Coleman is a very sensible

woman. She had married Starr when he was making eighteen dollars a week, and the good income that he was earning from Langhammer hadn't turned her head. She belonged to one or two women's clubs and read all the modern books, and, like Debussy, knew the difference between Freud and fraud, which a lot of people don't, and, all in all, she had managed to keep a very sensible head on her very shapely shoulders.

"I don't know what's the matter with me," complained Starr to Alice bitterly enough and in some humiliation. "But I do know that Langhammer has my number. My work is mechanical. Somehow or another, I don't believe in it any more. I write a scene with my tongue in my cheek!"

"Perhaps you need a vacation!" suggested Alice, who had always wanted to take a trip in the winter and see what Palm Beach was really like.

"But I am not tired," argued Starr. "I can never feel any healthier than I feel now. I am almost disgustingly healthy, my love. I don't know——"

"I know!" crowed Alice. "I know just what's the matter with you!"

"Well, what is it?"

"You ought to be pseudo-analyzed!"

"Oh, shucks, Alice! Be sensible!"

"But that is sensible, Starr. It's the most sensible thing ever. You admit yourself that your body is all right. Well, what's wrong then, if it isn't your mind?"

"Did I hear you say there was something wrong with my mind?" Starr was indignant.

"Yes, stupid! Don't you know that your mind can get sick just as well as your body? It doesn't mean that you're crazy necessarily!"

"Not necessarily?" repeated Starr sarcastically.

"No! But you ought to have a mental straightening out. Now I know just what you ought to do. There was a man lectured before our Tuesday club a few weeks ago—a Doctor Sylvaine. Oh, Starr, he was wonderful. He knew so much about a person's inner thoughts, repressed desires, secret longings and all that, he just made you get the creeps. Ugh! But he was right about everything. Starr!"

"Yes, love!" said Starr patiently.

"Why don't you go and have Doctor Sylvaine examine your mind?"

"I will like the devil!" exploded Starr.

But he went, of course. He didn't go like the devil, but nevertheless and notwithstanding he went. Alice usually had her way in such things. Doctor Sylvaine's office was in one of the expensive Fifties, and Starr mentally surrendered to paying him a couple of weeks' salary before he even started.

But he was unprepared for the kind of a man he found Doctor Sylvaine to be.

He was the last type in the world from professional. He looked very stern. His mouth was big, and when he spoke he showed two gleaming rows of teeth. His eyes were round and large and blackly sparkling. And he was a giant of a man, six feet three, if he was an inch, with a chest like a prizefighter and arms that might have been constructed for breaking crowbars or some other such gentle exercise. He was really a big man clad in a plaid suit.

When he opened his mouth to speak Starr prepared his ears for a bellowing roar of his voice. But he was disappointed. Doctor Sylvaine's fierce appearance and mildly treble voice almost made Starr laugh in his face. He talked like a florist's office boy.

"What seems to be the trouble, Mr. Coleman?" he asked when they were seated in the psycho-analyst's private office.

In great and sympathetic detail Starr explained. His picture stories were no good any more. Langhammer was planning to dismiss him. He wanted to find a way to reawaken his interest in life and in the stories about life which it was his job to write.

"I see!" said Doctor Sylvaine thoughtfully. "I see!"

But Starr was satisfied that the big man with the little voice didn't see at all. He was beginning to believe that the doctor was just a smooth-talking fraud, when the doctor astonished him by asking him to lie down on a couch.

For the next two hours Starr was in a daze. The doctor gave him a staggering mental examination. He asked the most impossible questions, such as:

"Did you ever seen a blue horse chew tobacco?"

"What would you rather do more than anything else in the world?"

"What are the fashions in men's hats in heaven this spring?"

And lots of idiotic questions like that. Starr soon decided that not himself, but the doctor, needed a mental examination. But that was only because Starr was ignorant of psycho-analysis and the methods by which the Freudians come to their singular determinations about their patients.

Several times the doctor got up and left him alone, apparently for no reason at all. While he was gone Starr had the uncomfortable feeling that the professor was peeping at him from some hidden point of observation. He didn't like it, and he kicked his heels savagely against the couch. Then he stopped kicking his heels. The professor might regard it as a symptom and misunderstand it.

The early winter dusk was approaching, when the doctor was satisfied that he had examined Starr sufficiently.

"My diagnosis will have to be checked up!" he said. "It probably will take two days. But I can tell you right now that you need a simpler diet, more air and more sunshine. And I imagine you don't get enough exercise. You ought to walk more. Your trouble is largely physical. Some doctors would give you a tonic. But nature's tonic, food, sunshine and fresh air, are the main things, coupled with some mental exercises which I shall prescribe for you after checking up your diagnosis!"

Starr got up haggardly from the couch. He felt as if he had undergone an operation.

"I guess you're right about my not getting enough exercise," he said glumly. "All day I am tied down to a desk and at night——"

Just then the telephone on the desk close at hand gave a shrill ring. It so startled Starr that he jumped, and then he flushed with rage at the pitying glance with the giant psycho-analyst bestowed upon him.

"Excuse me just a moment!" pleaded Doctor Sylvaine and, lifting up the receiver, uttered a mild "Helloa!"

For the next few moments Starr was entertained by the indistinct babbling stutter coming from the other end of the wire. Finally Doctor Sylvaine broke in with

"Impossible, Mrs. Dale! Utterly absurd and impossible! Your life is perfectly safe. Yes! Perfectly safe!"

More stuttering babble from the other end of the wire.

"A curse!" exclaimed Doctor Sylvaine in mild contempt. "My dear Mrs. Dale, a curse is only a superstition. There is no truth in all that kind of stuff. We are living in an enlightened age, dear lady. Calm yourself! There is no such thing as a curse, damn it! There is no such thing as a ghost. Now, what's that?"

A hysterical stream of conversation bubbled in the receiver.

"Oh, come now," finally from Doctor Sylvaine. "You must be mistaken. Certainly you must. You only think you saw it!"

An angry clatter in the receiver.

"Marks on your throat? What kind of marks?"

A snarl in the receiver.

"Claws? Bird claws?"

Another long stream of conversation.

"And you honestly believe in that old superstition of the vampire?"

More conversation.

"Well!" said Doctor Sylvaine, obviously perturbed, "if you really think there is anything sinister in your house, perhaps I had better come out. Of course, it cannot be anything supernatural. There is a reasonable explanation, you may be sure. But if you think that your life is in danger, why not report the matter to the police?"

After listening for a moment, he said:

"Well, you can't wonder at them, Mrs. Dale. It does all sound a bit preposterous, you know. But if you take it so seriously and want me, I'll come right out!"

He hung up the receiver, and turned away from the phone, so deeply preoccupied

that he had obviously forgotten the presence of Starr.

"Doctor!"

Doctor Sylvaine jumped himself, being more startled than Starr had been by the telephone bell. He had fallen into an intense reverie.

"Oh, forgive me, Mr. Coleman!" he exclaimed. "That telephone call quite upset me. I didn't mean to detain you, and I beg your pardon. If you will come in and see me in a few days——"

"But, Doctor——"

"Yes?"

"Well, I didn't mean to be an eavesdropper, you understand, but I couldn't avoid hearing what you said over the telephone just now. As a writer of stories for the pictures, I can't help being curious about it. From what I gathered there is some big mystery in some lady's home!"

"Oh, there is that!" conceded Doctor Sylvaine gravely. "But it is a very personal and private matter."

"I don't mean to pry," pleaded Starr. "But if I go out of here without knowing more than I do, I won't be able to sleep tonight. I suppose I am pretty brash to speak up this way, but don't forget my profession. Wouldn't it be possible to let me know something about the curse, and the bird's claws, and the ghost and some of that stuff?"

The doctor ran both his hands carelessly through his beard.

"I don't see why not!" he said. "It's unprofessional, perhaps, but I don't blame you much for asking. I can't tell you all, but I can tell you some of it. Only I haven't time. I've got to get over there right away!"

"Where is it?" asked Starr.

"Out in the wilds of Westchester County, not far from Long Island Sound!"

"Well, but I live in Larchmont. Can't we——"

"Certainly we can. My way lies beyond Larchmont, but I'll be very glad to drive you that far and tell you what little I will permit myself to tell anybody while we are driving."

But it was not until they had crossed the bridge over the Harlem River and were headed for the suburbs that Doctor Sylvaine would consent to discuss the matter at all. And what he did say was exceedingly meagre.

"You see," he explained, "a patient of mine, a certain Mrs. Dale, has recently leased the old Bland estate, near Rye. The house hasn't been occupied for years. Mrs. Dale is an elderly widow and exceedingly nervous. She lives with two sisters and a number of servants in the seclusion of the estate. I myself told her she must live in seclusion; excitement would kill her. That is why I am going to her now. She must be calmed. Well, after she had moved into the place the servants learned of a local superstition regarding it. There is supposed to be a family curse on the estate—some old skeleton in the Bland family who used to live there, don't you know. The wild part of it is that a vampire bird is supposed to have its nest somewhere in the place, but of course no one has ever seen the bird or found its nest. It's all nonsense, of course. But Mrs. Dale is nervous, and she is also incredibly superstitious. She has been calling me up for the last few days, telling me of hearing mysterious noises and what not. But this afternoon she capped the climax. Over the telephone, in a really dangerous state, she told me she had seen a ghost, and that something attacked her in her sleep, gouging at her throat. She says the marks are still on her throat and that they are like the claws of some gigantic bird!"

"My God!" exclaimed Starr. "How can you account for a thing like that?"

"I don't account for it!" retorted Doctor Sylvaine. "I don't believe it happened!"

Singularly enough, they had talked so long and earnestly about the mystery that the road had been slipping unheeded beneath the tires; Larchmont had been entered and passed, and now they were at Rye. Doctor Sylvaine had forgotten that he was to put down Starr at his home, and Starr, having had his own plans in mind, had neglected to remind him.

"See that Norman castle behind those larches up there?" said Doctor Sylvaine. "That's the place!"

Starr looked at the gloomy old building in silence. It looked like a place where many mysteries might be concealed; somehow it made him think of the giant's castle in a fairy tale.

"My God, doctor, look!" he suddenly cried hoarsely.

Suddenly there came from the grounds which they were just entering a long and piercing shriek of agony. It was a woman's voice—the cry of one at the very point of despair. Poignant and anguished it wailed across the barren, frozen wastes of lawn around them.

And as Doctor Sylvaine followed the pointing finger of Starr, the practical man of psychology turned the barest shade whiter at what he saw.

A huge black bird, with flapping wings, was circling around the tower of the mansion.

And as they watched it it suddenly vanished!

CHAPTER TWO

DOCTOR SYLVAINE recollected immediately that he had no right to bring a stranger with him to the home of Mrs. Dale.

"I got to talking and forgot!" he exclaimed in a gentle bewilderment. "I haven't any right to bring you along. But that cry——"

"You might need me!" pleaded Starr.

"Yes, I might!" agreed Doctor Sylvaine heartily. "I didn't like that sound. Did you?"

"No. But hadn't we better hurry? It sounded to me like a call for help."

Doctor Sylvaine's pirate face looked worried.

"Of course there couldn't be any truth in all that talk," he reflected aloud, "but perhaps we had better go on in and see. Don't you think so?"

"I certainly do. And please don't talk any more!" cried Starr impatiently. "Let's get on!"

Doctor Sylvaine started the car again, and in a few moments they were at the *porte-cochere*. But no attendant was there to admit them, and a deep silence brooded over the darkened landscape. After that one piercing scream there had come no further sound.

Starr was too interested to wait for Doctor Sylvaine. Leaping from the car, he tried the door and found that it was open.

"Come on!" he cried, and from that moment forward it was the younger man who assumed the leadership. Doctor Sylvaine was big and bearded and looked like a pirate, but the slight young moving picture writer had the courage and the audacity of youth, and he took unquestioned command.

They entered a deserted hallway. Standing in the centre of its increasing and shuddering shadows, Starr cupped his hands and shouted:

"Helloa! Is there any one here?"

But only silence answered him. The sound of his voice struck echoes from the lofty rafters, and there were mocking reproductions of his voice in far vistas and corridors.

"This *is strange!*" mused Doctor Sylvaine. "Perhaps we had better go immediately to Mrs. Dale's room. I know just where it is!"

The door of the boudoir to which they came was closed, but not locked. They knocked, and when no answer came they thrust open the door.

A terrible scene confronted them.

The entire room was in a silent uproar of confusion. Chairs, tables and lamps had been overturned; the bedclothes had been torn in fury from the mattress, strewing the floor with sheets and blankets; everything was disarranged and seemed to speak of violence, fierce struggle and——

"Look there!" said Starr hoarsely.

Doctor Sylvaine had seen it, too. There was a round red stain in the very centre of the floor.

"It's blood!" said the psycho-analyist heavily.

"It's blood!" repeated Starr. Strangely his horror was tempered with a saving thrill. Here was something in real life quite as exciting as the stories which he had writ-

ten for the moving picture drama. He had never believed such things could actually transpire. On the threshold of what he already sensed to be a profound and baffling mystery, he shared excitement with horror; every nerve was tingling in his young body with the desire to follow up this bloody trail, through whatever dangers and adventures it might develop, and bring the guilty to justice.

"This is very startling," said Doctor Sylvaine. "I wonder what we ought to do about it."

Starr felt a momentary tinge of pity for the big and bearded man, who was so helpless in the face of a situation requiring action and decision. In his laboratory, he reflected, Doctor Sylvaine was a dominating man. But when brought face to face with such a crisis as this—well, Starr was the type that was needed.

"I know what we ought to do," he said crisply. "You told me this house was occupied by Mrs. Dale and her sisters with their servants. Now it seems as if the place was deserted—and deserted under very singular circumstances. This room seems to tell a bloody story. We have to search this house from top to bottom, from the garret to the cellar, and see what we can find. I am afraid——"

"Yes?" breathed Doctor Sylvaine distractedly.

"That something has happened to your patient, Mrs. Dale. She was frightened, you know. She had said there were marks like the claws of a bird on her throat. We *did* see a bird, you know."

"But a bird couldn't do all this!" cried Doctor Sylvaine, waving his hand wearily at the chaos in the room.

"No!" Starr had to admit that. "But come on. The first thing to do is to search!"

They did search. They explored every room in the great, dark old castle, turning on lights in one apartment after another; peering into rooms packed with ghostly, unused furniture; opening the doors of closets, while hours passed and they went from floor to floor, high up the coiling rounds of winding tower stairs, down long and silent corridors seeping with shadows; everywhere in the entire establishment they searched.

But they found nothing.

There was no sign of any living person anywhere. In Mrs. Dale's library they came upon a magazine turned down at a page, as if the reader had been interrupted. They found a sewing basket with the needle thrust into some lacework, as if that, too, had been hastily put down. But their explorations and their continued shouting was without avail.

They found nothing, and there came no answer to their anxious calls.

"The grounds," said Starr at last. "We must make a thorough search of the grounds. Perhaps——"

But he did not finish. Between the worried doctor and himself there was an unspoken expectation. Both knew what they dreaded might be found at the end of their long hunt.

Behind the low garden walls, among the clumps of firs and cedars, under the laurel bushes, everywhere they looked on the grounds, but equally without result. It was well past seven o'clock when they returned to the house and its rooms of mystery and overturned furniture and bloodstain on the floor thoroughly discouraged.

"I have forgotten something," said Starr as they returned to the library and sat down to reconsider what they should do. "Alice expects me home to dinner to-night."

"My dear fellow!" exclaimed Doctor Sylvaine, "I owe you a thousand apologies. You have been most kind. I suppose you will have to——"

"But no," interrupted Starr eagerly. "We will see this thing through together. Only I want to telephone home and let her know where I am. She might be worried about me!"

Doctor Sylvaine did not protest. It was obvious he did not relish the prospect of being left alone in the house.

Telephoning home, however, proved impossible. Starr harried the operator for more than fifteen minutes without result.

"No answer," she told him finally. "I've been ringing them, and they don't answer."

Starr felt a twinge of uneasiness. Alice

should have been home. He wondered if she had worried about his long absence and had gone out anywhere because of that.

"That reminds me," said Doctor Sylvaine. "I had better telephone my office, too. I had some appointments for this evening."

But the doctor had even worse luck than Starr. He couldn't even get the operator to answer. All his flashing of the receiver hook availed him nothing. The line was dead.

"That's odd," he said as he put the instrument back on the little table. "Is the service out here as bad as all that!"

"Wait a minute," said Starr.

He stooped and found the green wires trailing along the baseboard of the wall. He followed the emerald trail across the room, through the door and out into the corridor. The doctor watched him with a kind of impatient distrust. But suddenly a shout came from Starr out in the corridor.

"Doctor!" he called. "Come here!"

When the physician reached his side he found Starr trembling with the excitement of a tremendous discovery.

"Five minutes ago," he said, "I was talking over that telephone. But now you can't get the operator. Well, look at this!"

The two of them bent to their knees and Starr struck a match, exposing a singular thing.

The wires had been cut!

CHAPTER THREE

THE sinister implication of that discovery thrilled and disconcerted them.

They were not alone!

In all their searching they had found no one, and yet some one was near them, watching them, following them silently, and cutting them off from communication with the outside world!

Who? Where? Why?

The two men looked at each other with graver faces. The consciousness that they were being spied upon by some invisible adversary was disheartening. Whatever they did might be seen. Whatever they said might be heard.

And there was that room upstairs which had been the boudoir of the missing Mrs. Dale. What of the overturned confusion they had seen? What of the bloodclot on the floor?

And Starr found himself reflecting, what of the vampire bird?

He was not superstitious. But Mrs. Dale had told Doctor Sylvaine that she had awakened after a nightmare to find claw marks on her throat.

And he *had* seen that giant bird circling around the grim old Norman tower!

"Doctor Sylvaine," said Starr with such calmness as he could command, "I believe there is a madman loose in this house. I believe he has killed Mrs. Dale and perhaps every one else that was here. I believe that lunatic cut those wires!"

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Doctor Sylvaine feebly. "Hadn't we better call the police?"

"How?" demanded Starr. "Through the cut wires of the telephone? Or do you want me to leave you here and walk to the town?"

"No! No! No!" protested Doctor Sylvaine. "I don't think we should separate!"

"Not with a dangerous lunatic prowling around these dark corridors," agreed Starr. "But I don't mind staying here alone. Why don't you go for the police?"

"No, that wouldn't do, either," replied Doctor Sylvaine firmly. "We ought to stick together. We will stick together!"

They shook hands on that, and while they stood in the dark corridor clasping hands a sound came to them that curdled the very blood in their veins.

It was a sharp and sudden laugh!

On the stillness it sounded with an almost ghastly intensity. It was mocking, taunting. Just one laugh after another—quick, mirthless, a sarcastic challenge.

"Did you hear that?" breathed Doctor Sylvaine.

"It sounded like some one laughing," replied Starr.

"It *was some* one laughing," declared the

doctor with conviction. "Or else it was *something!*"

Before Starr could reply the laughing ceased, to be followed by the sound of light footsteps.

The corridor was now so completely dark that it was impossible for the two men to see each other's faces. But they could hear those running footfalls, as if some one were dancing on stockinged toes, through the mazes of the hallways, to the melody of music so fine and distant that it did not reach their mortal ears.

"It sounds like a——"

"Like a what?" asked Starr as the doctor came to a shuddering pause.

"Like a bird walking!" gasped the doctor.

At the same moment there came a sound like the whir of wide wings. A shape passed them in the gloom, and Starr was ready to swear that warm feathers had brushed his cheek!

CHAPTER FOUR

"COME on—quick!" whispered Starr tensely. "We'll follow that damned thing!"

Without speaking again, the men rushed down the corridor, Starr fumbling for his matches as he ran. Without slackening his pace he struck the match and looked ahead. The fluttering little flame was almost hopeless; it gave only a feeble and momentary illumination, but it was sufficient to give them one glimpse.

What they saw they couldn't believe in!

Around the corner of the corridor they had caught a glance of something that looked like an enormous two-legged bird; a thing as big as a human being, but covered with feathers!

The match went out!

In the darkness that followed the two men did not, dared not, hesitate. They plunged on toward the corner around which whatever it was they had seen had turned. But as they, too, tried to turn that corner something happened.

Something seemed to throw itself upon them.

Over their faces and their hands came a blanket-like, fuzzy pall that enveloped them, covered them with its fuzzy folds, and then something coiled and twined around Starr's feet and tripped him.

He fell, struggling angrily, impotently, with whatever it was that entangled him. A crash at his left and a grunt of fear told him that Doctor Sylvaine had met a similar fate. They had both been thrown to the floor.

As they scrambled frantically to free themselves they heard again that horror of a laugh.

Even in the wild panic that possessed him, the desire to get free and on his feet again and strike out in the dark at whatever the fiendish thing was that had assailed him, Starr was witted enough to analyze that voice.

It sounded like the croak of some giant and fiendish bird!

CHAPTER FIVE

WHEN they had finally got to their feet and struck another match a humiliating surprise confronted them.

They had been fighting with a huge rug!

Their unknown assailant had waited around the corner of the hallway, and in the darkness had thrown the rug upon them. As they struggled he, or she, or it, or whatever it was, had somehow tripped them, and thus, while they were struggling on the floor in the dark with the rug, their enemy had escaped.

But he must be near at hand.

With a little cry of triumph Starr exclaimed:

"This is a blind hallway, doctor! At the end of it is only a closet. And there are only two rooms, one on each side. Here! Take these matches! You go in that room! I'll go in this!"

He did not give Doctor Sylvaine time to argue. He strode across the hall, striking

one of his matches as he did so and opening the door.

As he stepped across the threshold the light went out. He struck another match. Prowling slowly, he sought for the electric switch and, finding it, turned on the light.

The room in which he found himself was evidently an abandoned bedroom. There were no evidences of recent occupancy; dust had accumulated thickly upon the chairs and bureau and the old-fashioned high-boy in the far corner. But Starr noticed that the door of a closet was partly open.

There was something sinister about that half-open door. What might lurk behind it no man could foretell. For the first time that night Starr wished that he carried a revolver. But he had never carried a weapon in his life. In his picture stories all his heroes had revolvers in their pockets when they needed them. But in New York that was against the Sullivan law, and Starr was a law-abiding citizen.

Nevertheless that half-opened door was a challenge.

The thrill of the adventure upon which he was embarked had still command of his soul, superseding and taking precedence over a certain horror which it had inevitably imposed. If there was danger, what of it?

Nothing was more important to Starr than to find out what, if anything, was hiding behind that door.

Stepping softly and with no weapon in his hands, he crossed the floor and came closer to the door. He had reached out his hand to seize it by the knob and tear it fully back upon its hinges when it was drawn suddenly and violently shut.

Some one inside the closet had pulled it shut!

To Starr's infinite amazement he then heard a key turn in the lock from the inside.

No bird could turn a key in a lock! Whoever it was, a human being was in that closet—a human being who had reason to hide and who preferred the danger of suffocation in a narrow closet to meeting Starr Coleman face to face.

Bewildered, Starr looked around him. What should he do now? Should he call Doctor Sylvaine? Wonder what was happening to the doctor in his tour of inspection of the room across the hallway?

As if the question had been telepathic, as if the unvoiced question had winged its way invisibly through the air and had reached the doctor, Starr suddenly heard a howl.

"Help! Help! Murder!"

There was no question that it was the voice of Doctor Sylvaine.

Starr gave one glance at the locked closet and came to a decision. Regardless of everything else, he would have to reply to that cry for help.

He rushed across the room, out of the door, and to the door at the opposite side of the hall. Kicking the door open, he dashed into a baffling surprise.

Prone on the floor lay Doctor Sylvaine, tied hand and foot, and with a crimson gash across his forehead.

As Starr bent over him he said:

"I think it did for me this time!"

"What was it?" gasped Starr.

"God knows!" shuddered Doctor Sylvaine weakly. "It was too big for me, too strong for me—and too horrible. It was like a big bird! It struck me with its claw! Then I went out. When I came to I found myself bound hand and foot like this!"

"Well, I'll soon get you out of this," said Starr grimly as he reached for his penknife.

He was about to cut asunder the bonds of his companion when a sound behind him caused him instantly to pause, to turn, to look.

He was just in time to see two hands groping in the doorway!

Nothing was visible but the hands! They were far down in the opening of the doorway near the floor, but they rose silently, swiftly, caressing the edge of the door, as if seeking for something hidden there.

They were small, white, womanly hands —and they were stained with crimson!

CHAPTER SIX

WITH a shout Starr leaped to his feet and darted toward the door.

He was determined to seize those hands and drag the body which used them from around the hiding-place of the doorway into the light of the room where Doctor Sylvaine lay bound. But before he had fully reached a standing position the hands had darted back; again came that choking chortle of a laugh, and when he reached the doorway he looked up and down a deserted hallway.

Dazed and baffled, Starr stood still.

Of what use was pursuit? In this singular mansion things appeared and disappeared so mysteriously that it seemed impossible to catch up with them.

There was still the mystery of the missing household to account for. The whole family had disappeared; Mrs. Dale's boudoir was in picturesque and sinister disarray, and there was a bloodstain on the floor. In the closet of the room across the hallway some one had locked himself in. On the floor of the room where he remained lay Doctor Sylvaine, still with his bleeding head, his arms, hands and feet knotted with twine cords. And somewhere, somehow, the owner of those small white hands was hiding, after having emitted that horrible, bird-like laughter.

"I don't care what happens!" declared Starr aloud. "If all the ghosts in Christendom come in this room, I am going to complete first the thing that I started out to do. I am going to set you free, doctor!"

"Yes, do, for God's sake!" pleaded the doctor weakly.

Without more ado Starr again drew out his knife and knelt beside the prostrate psycho-analyist. With a few swift jerks he had cut away the cords, and the doctor lay breathing heavily, relieved, but too weak for the moment to get up.

"Are you feeling very weak?" asked Starr in grave concern. He had not a great deal of respect for the doctor's courage, but he liked him a great deal nevertheless. With a profound sigh the doctor rose to a sitting position and stared glumly at his patient.

"I feel pretty weak," he admitted. "Whoever hit me did a good job. I was knocked out completely. But now, Mr. Coleman, I have a plan. It came to me while you were watching those infernal hands. Did it strike you at all that those hands looked like claws?"

"No!" said Starr decisively. "They looked like a woman's hands. I am beginning to believe that our escaped lunatic is a woman. Perhaps one of Mrs. Dale's old sisters was mad!"

"But they were most estimable maiden aunts," protested the doctor earnestly.

"Even so, the most estimable maiden aunts sometimes go insane, don't they?"

"They do!" admitted the doctor sadly.

"She might have murdered the whole family, and knowing this house much better than we do——"

"Go on!" urged the doctor as Starr paused.

"Listen! Don't you hear something?"

They listened intently, and both of them heard a sound that brought a slight chill to their veins by its very faintness and indistinctness.

It was like the sound of a woman weeping!

CHAPTER SEVEN

"I CAN'T stand this damned suspense much longer!" cried Starr. "I've got to have action. If I ever come to grips with that party——"

"But suppose it *is* a vampire?" insinuated the doctor, again rubbing his head.

"Vampire hell! Did you ever hear of a vampire with a woman's hands?"

"Certainly!" declared the doctor. "That is the legend. A vampire is a bird only a part of the time. The rest of the time it is a woman. That is why we call women who lure men——"

"Oh, hush! I thought you were a scientist. You are talking rubbish. That blow on the head must have hurt your mind.

No! But, by gracious, I had almost forgotten something!"

"I have forgotten almost everything!" complained the doctor, running his hand through his beard.

"There is some one locked in a closet in the room across the hall," said Starr. "If I only had a skeleton key!"

The doctor smiled weakly.

"I have one!" he announced. "I've carried it ever since I was a young man. But do you think——"

"Let's have it!" ordered Starr.

The doctor with the face of a pirate and the soul of a shepherd rose heavily to his feet. Thrusting one enormous hand into his pocket, he produced a many-ribbed little steel key and passed it over to Starr.

Without another word Starr hurriedly left the room. As he came into the hallway he glanced up and down, but only the reticent shadows met his gaze. There was no sign of any living thing.

Into the other room he passed, determination in his heart. The lights which he had left burning were unextinguished; the closet door was still tightly closed; all was apparently as he had left it when he turned to answer the doctor's call for help.

As he fitted the key into the lock of the closet door Starr found himself tingling and glowing, but not with fear. A strange sense of exhilaration was upon him. It came to him with a sense of shock and a little shame that he was actually enjoying his adventure. This, he knew, was nothing to be proud of. Unless all signs failed, murder had been done—wholesale murder of a lot of helpless old women. Yet the tang of hidden danger was in his blood like wine; and if, when he opened this closet door, something was to rush upon him and there would be a fight to the death, well, they would find that there was fight and plenty of it in a fellow who, until the present moment, had had the chance only to write about fights.

The key turned easily enough in the lock. With a firm hand he seized the knob and yanked open the door fiercely.

An empty cupboard, emptier than the famous one of Mother Hubbard, was all that met his startled eyes!

The closet was deserted. There was literally nothing in it. In a frenzy of bafflement Starr threw himself on his knees, seeking for a trapdoor, for a sliding panel on the wall, or some other means of egress by which the mysterious person might have escaped.

There was nothing of the kind to be found. It was simply an ordinary cupboard and nothing more.

And now was Starr deceived by his ears? Was he tricked by over-tension, the too taut burden of overwrought nerves? Or did he really hear a woman scream with fright?

To him it sounded very real. And, infinitely worse than that, it sounded familiar. There was a terrifying suspicion in his heart. He rushed to the door, to be confronted by a paralyzing spectacle.

It was Doctor Sylvaine, laughing hideously.

Doctor Sylvaine—laughing!

The great giant of a psycho-analyist was showing all his white teeth through the brush of his brown beard. His eyes were rolling in titanic, gigantesque mirth. His hands were clutching and unclutching, and his head was waggling from side to side on the thick axis of his neck, and the sound that came from between his parted lips was the laughter of a maniac.

"Ho! Ho!" he howled, thumbing his nose at the startled Starr. "Seek them and trace them and see where I place them, for I am to hide them and you are to find them. And you are making a hell of a mess of the job!"

"You!" gasped Starr. "You! You did it all! You murdered them! You——"

"I brought you here!" howled the doctor in an excess of mirth. "But I didn't want to bring you. You made me. But now that you are here, you might as well see the whole damn parade!"

With an amazing agility for so huge a man he backed away and rushed down the corridor. Unhesitatingly Starr followed after him. The doctor turned the corner and Starr, circling widely from the wall to

avoid again being trapped, was just in time to see the final and most fantastic horror of the night.

The doctor, from some hidden recess, had seized the form of a woman. She was slight and slender and living. Starr saw in that quick, appraising glance the fierce struggle to be free from those relentless blacksmith arms.

"Help! Help! Help!" shrieked the voice.

Again that terrifying suspicion raised itself in Starr's mind. This was the voice, this was the woman that he had heard. Her hands were the hands he had seen. He knew her.

With a roar of hate he threw himself forward, but he was just a moment too late.

In one bounding stride the doctor had reached a door, had sprung inside and slammed it shut. The hurtling body of Starr fell against its stout panels.

But Starr had caught one glimpse of the agonized face of the doctor's captive, and that glimpse had turned the young moving picture writer into a living brand of fire.

For he had looked upon the face of Alice, his wife.

CHAPTER EIGHT

STARR would have beaten the door down with his shoulders; he would have tried to pull down the walls with his bare hands; all the might and strength of dearly held love was in his frantic body when that door slammed shut.

Then a hand was placed on his shoulder.

He turned, and to his infinite amazement he beheld two figures—the erect and calmly smiling face of Doctor Sylvaine and the laughing, crying, loving countenance of his Alice.

"We just slipped through another door," explained the doctor quietly. "You must really keep cool, Mr. Coleman. Everything is really all right. In fact, I think a dinner is ready for us just across the roadway. We have been playing around this deserted old house too long, anyway!"

It took a long time to mollify the excited young Starr Coleman; for he was a furiously wrought-up young man. As a matter of fact, his mollification might never have been effected had not Alice smiled at him and kissed him when he began to say cuss-words.

But finally they led him, Doctor Sylvaine and Alice, over to a pretty little cottage on the same grounds—a house concealed behind a hill, and there an Irish servant woman served them a meal that they will never forget the longest day they live.

It was while they were waiting for the next serving of the courses that Doctor Sylvaine said:

"After all you did have a good thrill, now, didn't you, young man?"

"Well, suppose I did?" replied Starr, a bit ungraciously.

"Then I shall send you a substantial bill," declared the doctor with great gusto and satisfaction. "My dear young man, it was all a part of my treatment. You see, psycho-analysis is a new thing, but it is accomplishing wonderful results. But I am much more practical in my application of its theories than most men. Psycho-analysis teaches us that we are all full of suppressed and repressed desires, secret longings and aspirations. When your wife came to see me, without your knowledge, three days ago and told me your case, I knew even without having seen you what was the trouble. You needed a real thrill. You were spending your time writing artificial thrills and wishing something would happen to you. But nothing ever did. Your suppressed desires took the form of wishing you could have some real excitement—something as good as you put into your own stories, and when that desire was not satisfied your work began to get poor.

"Well, I own that place over there where we had all our adventures. I intend to make it a sanitarium. It was easy to plot a little scenario with your wife's assistance. I told her about the eagle that lives near this house—the one you saw when we drove in—and that gave her the idea of the vampire. She worked out the whole

story about Mrs. Dale and her sisters and servants, none of whom ever existed except in her own imagination. I told it all to you, after you had been tricked into coming out here from my prearranged conversation with your wife over the telephone. And she had been busy, setting the stage, spilling red paint, tying me up, running up and down the hallways, and things like that. We had a rehearsal yesterday, and the performance to-day was truly perfect, Mrs. Coleman. Even that trick of brushing your feather fan against his cheek worked. As for the——"

"Stop!" howled Starr. "I don't want to hear any more!"

"What's the matter? Sore?" asked the doctor.

"No," said Starr happily. "I've just thought of the plot of a new story, and I know it's surely going to be a knock-out!"

And as a matter of fact it was. Langhammer says it was the best picture he's made so far. But there are lots more coming. Starr has gone straight ahead, without a hitch.

Doctor Sylvaine's bill was atrocious, out of all reason, in fact, but Starr paid it without a murmur.

The old pirate's system worked—and therefore it was worth the price.

CUNNIING AGAINST CAPITAL

VARIOUS schemes to "beat" the nickel-in-the-slot machine have been devised from time to time, such as blowing down the slot, or dropping in it a coin to which a string was attached. None of these, however, are trustworthy, failing as often as they succeed. It has remained for an urchin who haunts the East River ferry-houses to discover an infallible method of defrauding the greedy little slot of its dues.

"Are yer goin' to weigh, gents?" he said, stepping in front of a group of eight young men who were looking at the machine and discussing its merits.

"I'll weigh the hull o' yez for a penny apiece," chirped the little fellow.

"Come off, sonny," said one of the party, "you're not smart enough for that."

"I kin do it," came the answer; "bet yer a quarter I kin," and down went his bundle of papers on the floor and out came a handful of pennies. He was counting out twenty-five of them, when the man said:

"Put up your money, kid. If you can do what you say, I'll give you a quarter. Let's see how it's done."

"Gimme yer pennies first," said the lad, and he collected eight cents from the crowd.

He was a wizened, undersized little chap, and when he jumped on the platform of the machine and dropped a nickel of his own in the slot, the pointer slipped around to fifty-five pounds and stayed there. Standing on the extreme edge of the platform nearest the dial, he turned around to his audience.

"Now one of yez git on the front end of the platform," he said.

The biggest man in the crowd stepped up first and the finger slid around to 245 pounds.

"Two-forty-five, is it," said the little fellow, "for both of us. Mine's 55, and I guess yer scholar enough to figger out the difference. Now git off."

The big man did so, and the index finger swept back like a flash past the 55 mark and almost to the top again before the lad's weight asserted itself and the pointer quivered back to 55. The secret was out. The dial finger must return to the zero mark again to throw the registering machinery out of gear and stop the responsive movement which the first nickel set in motion. One after another the eight men weighed themselves, deducting the boy's weight from the figures indicated by the machine. When they were all done the lad too stepped down, and the machine set itself, with an angry click in its throat, to catch another nickel.

The Green Rock

By EDWARD F. MEDOSCH

ON a certain windy night late in November Detective John Fraser was worming his way through a narrow cellar window into the darkness of a great, rambling and deserted house that stood far back from the avenue. Here, inside these cold, mildewed walls, was to be enacted the climax of the great adventure which had begun with the theft of the Morris family jewels, valued at fifty thousand dollars.

More persistent than a bloodhound, Fraser had trailed the man whom he strongly suspected of being the robber—Simeon Geiger, the noted society man, whose past was buried in obscurity and whose present means of support was invisible to the eyes of men. The detective had a feeling that Geiger possibly acted in conjunction with others, and now, on beholding the great, silent mansion in its gloomy setting his intuition was strengthened. Fraser had taken the precaution, however, to instruct Officer Cassidy on this beat with respect to signals before he had slipped in through the gates of the big estate lying idle for the past six months.

Having passed through the narrow opening, the detective clung for a moment to the sill, then dropped to the brick floor. Concrete had not been much in vogue at the time this house was built. There was a musty odor about the place that caused him to wrinkle his nose and make his way quickly, with the aid of his flashlight, toward a stairs a short distance away.

He had a strong intuition as he climbed the stairs that he was about to enter into deadly conflict with desperate characters. However, since he had tracked his quarry this far, his pride would not allow him to retreat and call for official aid.

Reaching the head of the stairs, he turned a knob and pushed open a door. He was in complete darkness, nor did he hear a living sound. Closing the door behind him, he flashed on his light and found himself in a long room of ample width that immediately disclosed itself as a conservatory. At one side a set of French doors communicated with another room, also in darkness, and Fraser made his way over to the exit. The doors swung back easily, and he stepped into a square room fitted up as a tea-room.

He stood still and listened. Far away, it seemed, a murmur of low voices reached his ears.

"Sounds as though the meeting is on," he commented under his breath. "I'll just have to find out what it's all about."

Tiptoeing softly across the room, he passed through a door at the side opposite that which he had entered and found himself within a great, square hall, which was of huge dimensions when compared with the rooms that one met with in houses of modern construction. He permitted himself but a glimpse of his surroundings, as the voices were now much nearer. However, he had time to note that a grand staircase ascended opposite the entrance lobby and a wide portal, directly across from the tea-room, led into another room from which came the sound of the voices; also that a hall fireplace was in evidence beyond a low archway situated between the grand staircase and the doors to the tea-room.

"Some big roost!" he muttered, and then stole across the hardwood floor (evidently a later innovation) toward the darkened chamber.

Arriving at the doorway, he paused

abruptly. To the right, in a diagonal line from him, was a second doorway, through which a golden light streamed from the room beyond. And the voices of men could now be heard.

Fraser glided into the apartment directly before him and edged into a position from which he could observe what was going on in the lighted room. A knot of conspirators were gathered about a long table, above which was suspended a magnificent electrolier. This was the first picture that caught his eyes. The men were all well-dressed, but in their faces were the expressions that one associates with thieves and gamblers—the expression of greed and cunning and ruthless daring. All, with one exception, were unknown to him.

The one exception was Simeon Geiger, a tall, rather thin, black-haired individual with a short mustache and bold, pointed features. His seemed to be the dominating spirit as he glowered at his six companions and inhaled deeply upon his cigarette.

"Why should I divide the loot with you fellows?" he asked in a rough voice. "You don't think I've forgotten the threat one or two of you made a short time ago, do you, when you got cold feet and then wanted to quit and disrupt the organization! I'd be in a fine mess, wouldn't I, after I divided my spoils, and then you fellows suddenly took a notion that you wanted to quit the game! What do you take me for—a sucker?"

One of the seven men moved away from his chair, and Fraser suddenly saw what it was that Geiger held in his hand. It was nothing more nor less than a large rock of lustrous green color that closely resembled porphyry.

The detective suppressed a gasp. It was the identical rock that had been stolen the night before from the home of Olga Morris! His surmise, then, had been correct. He had trailed Geiger here because of certain indefinable suspicions, and those suspicions thus far had never played him false.

Simeon Geiger's black eyes darted swiftly from one face to another and a sneer played about his lips as he fingered the rock carelessly.

"You probably think I'm kidding you fellows, eh? Want to see what's inside of it, do you? Well, here goes!"

Fraser held his breath and watched. The rock was a rock no longer! It had suddenly opened, like a clamshell, between the man's fingers, and from its depths Geiger produced a small chamois bag. The next moment he had pulled a string and poured the contents of the bag upon the table before him.

A chorus of admiration arose from the gathering, and every neck craned forward to get a better glimpse of the booty which lay before the thief.

Fraser also strained forward to catch a glimpse of the wonderful stones, although it was not necessary for him to do so. He had seen the marvelous Morris jewels on many occasions, for Olga was a very close friend of Fraser's. They had been handed down as a family heirloom, and the girl's grief, when she had noticed her loss, was pathetic beyond description.

It was now that John Fraser regretted that he had not solicited the aid of a few officers in tracking down this vulpine thief. However, he was not expected to know that instead of finding one villain he would find seven.

"Until you fellows give proof," Geiger's voice went on, "that you're going to stick to the society and not squeal this booty remains in my possession. I shall not attempt to dispose of it without your consent, but I will not divide just at present!"

"But I divided up my pearl necklace," one of the men put in, and Fraser detected a dangerous note in his voice, "the pearls I took from Mrs. Joachim del Mar."

"So you did!" Geiger returned, without inflection. "And so will I divide these stones after I have proof of the loyalty of the rest of the men."

John Fraser stood tense watching for the next move. On those faces which were turned toward him incredulity, cunning and rage were variously depicted. The very atmosphere seemed charged with pregnant possibilities. Geiger only remained calm and faced the gang with glittering eyes.

It all seemed so unreal—the big, silent

house and the seven arch-conspirators staring with varying emotions at the glittering, pilfered jewels upon the table. The detective's eyes wandered away from them along the high, bare walls and toward another door some ten feet from them, beside which the electric switch was placed.

Then his gaze wandered back to the men at the table once more, when, without warning of any kind, there came the sound of a click and the room was plunged into darkness. Upon the instant a wild commotion ensued, and Fraser judged that the seven were scrambling for the stolen gems.

"Here's where I take a hand myself," he muttered grimly and sprang forward into the mêlée.

Jostling first one and then another and endeavoring to catch hold of their hands, he managed to extract a few stones from some one's fist, at the same time receiving a terrific blow in the face as payment.

"Who the hell switched off those lights?" he heard Geiger's voice exclaim in rage.

Nobody vouchsafed an answer, and the tumult continued. Fraser found himself getting rather the worst of the bargain, when, with the same disconcerting abruptness as before, the lights were switched on, and he beheld Simeon Geiger standing at one side of the room beside the push-button.

The robber of the Morris jewels surveyed the struggling men for a moment, then a queer expression crossed his face as his eyes fell upon John Fraser. Each knew the other.

"So!" he exclaimed with mock formality, coming toward the detective, "we are honored with unexpected company to-night! You really did a clever thing in turning off the lights so opportunely. How many of the gems did you recover?"

"I didn't switch off the lights," Fraser returned coolly, "and it's none of your business how many of the gems I recovered."

"I see!" Geiger laughed, but there was a dangerous ring in it. "Well, we'll make it our business to find out. Henry!"

In response to the call something heavy landed upon Fraser's head and he slumped to the floor unconscious.

It seemed ages later when he awoke and found himself in utter darkness. His head pained him exceedingly and his neck ached. Slowly feeling in his vest pocket for a match, he extracted one, quite forgetful of the fact that he had carried a flashlight with him when he had entered the house. He struck the match upon the floor, and by its sputtering light discovered that he had been carried into a small room, entirely unfamiliar to him, with its one window boarded shut.

The match burnt his finger-tips and he staggered to his feet. He had seen a door opposite the window and now made for that exit. Grasping the knob, he turned it quietly, but the door was locked.

"Trapped!" he laughed mirthlessly. He felt in his pockets for his flashlight and revolver. Both were missing.

"Well, they did a neat job," he commented, and then pressed his ear against the keyhole and listened.

Down below he could hear a slight shuffling of feet and an indistinct murmur of voices, from which he concluded that he had been carried upstairs.

He straightened and, crossing over to the point where he had noticed a window, felt about for the catch, and slowly raised the sash. Groping farther, he discovered a blank board wall outside. Striking a second match, he scrutinized the boards closely, and after some time a look of satisfaction crossed his features.

The match went out, and he promptly lighted a third. There was no electric light fixture in this room, as the owner had evidently considered it unimportant to install lights in a spare room, which was quite empty. Drawing forth his pocket knife, Fraser now began making an incision around a knot in one of the boards. After some time the task was finished, and with a well-directed blow the piece of wood was knocked out, leaving a knot-hole about an inch in diameter.

Fraser put his eye to the opening and looked out. Far away a street light could be seen, and he guessed that the room in which he was confined was at the front of the house.

Reaching beneath his shirt, he drew forth a coil of magnesium ribbon and examined it attentively.

"Evidently they only went through my pockets," he muttered, "or they'd have taken this also. Now it's up to Officer Cassidy to look out for this signal, as I told him. If he doesn't I'm out of luck!"

This was Fraser's pet method of calling for assistance, having used it before with marked success. Without more ado he now dropped one end through the knot-hole, retaining hold of the other. Then, striking a match, he lit the ribbon. Instantly a brilliant white flame flared up, illuminating the surroundings with day-like brilliance. It was consumed almost in a moment, and Fraser flung his end outside.

"That ought to bring some one," he soliloquized.

Perhaps five minutes had elapsed when there came a pounding and clamoring at the various doors below and Fraser knew his signal was answered. He stood near the door waiting for an attack or for release.

The minutes dragged by and the hammering ceased. Somewhere a door crashed in. Footfalls echoed loudly over the floors where the rugs had been taken up, and some were now coming in the direction of his room.

The detective pounded on the door and called out. There was an answering shout, and in a few moments the lock was turned and a blue-coat entered the room, bull's-eye in hand.

"Oh, it's you, Cassidy!" Fraser exclaimed as the man stepped in. "Did you catch any of them?"

"Catch me eye!" retorted Cassidy. "There's nobody in this here bloomin' buildin' except yourself and us, unless maybe there's a few ghosts around somewhere."

Fraser rubbed his face and stared at the speaker.

"Do you mean to say you broke in here and didn't discover any one until you saw me? Did you go all through the house?"

"I didn't, but the rist of 'em did," Cassidy returned.

"Why, you're crazy," Fraser snapped and strode out into the hall. "Do you think for a minute that I locked myself in here? How many men did you bring along?"

"The inspector's got ten men surroundin' the house and two others beside him and me inside of it."

A medium-sized, pleasant-looking individual almost rushed into them, and Fraser stepped back a pace to survey the stranger.

"That you, Standish?" he exclaimed.

"That's me all over," Inspector Standish returned, wiping his forehead. "What the devil's wrong in this house?"

"This house is being used as a rendezvous for thieves, and there's seven of them in here now."

"I haven't seen a soul," the inspector said promptly, "except you."

"Do you mean to say that seven men got away from here without any of your officers seeing them?"

Inspector Standish shook his head slowly.

"There's just a possibility that they got away before we came, but I don't think it at all likely. Cassidy called up headquarters immediately after you told him your plan, and my men were on their way even before you gave the signal for help. What did you discover?"

"I saw and heard enough to know that seven men are leagued together in the pursuit of crime and that the jewels which were stolen last night from the home of Olga Morris are now in the hands of various members of the gang. In fact, I have a few here myself."

Quickly he recounted the incidents as they had occurred.

Inspector Standish nodded shortly throughout the other's speech and then started for the head of the stairs.

"We'll each have to do a little quiet prowling on our own hook," he announced. "If we stay together we're all liable to miss them. You examine this floor thoroughly, Fraser. You might take Cassidy along. He's handy in emergencies. I was going downstairs, but I think I'll go up instead and see what's on the third floor. Smith and Duncan are downstairs, and they're capable men. We're bound to find the crooks, because all the windows are boarded shut and every door leading outside, except the

one we broke in, is bolted on the inside. They're bound to be hiding somewhere about."

"They're mighty quiet if they're in here," Fraser remarked, "but, on the other hand, I don't see how they could have gotten past your ten men."

"Well, let's go!" the inspector said impatiently.

He started toward the stairs leading upward at the end of the corridor, and Fraser grasped the open-mouthed Cassidy by the arm.

"All right, old Irish potato," he whispered. "We'll go back in that direction."

He led the way quietly along the big corridor, while the officer flashed his light to and fro, muttering something under his breath. At every door he paused and tried the knob, but nearly all were locked.

Now they reached a turning and entered one of the great wings of the rambling old house, which was half modern and half ancient. The vista was not unlike that of the main hallway, and a wide matting stretched forward and lost itself in the darkness beyond. They had gone down this corridor but a short distance when Fraser put out his arm and stopped the man behind him.

"Did you see that light," he whispered, "up there on the right side beyond the reach of your flash? It was near the floor."

Cassidy snapped off his torchlight.

"The bloomin' beggars must be hidin' up here," he commented. "Well, we'll give 'em a warrm reciption!"

John Fraser resumed his stealthy tread and had nearly reached the door, from beneath which a bright light emanated, when he paused again and turned his head toward his companion.

"Give me your gun," he whispered. "I'll hold them off till you bring up the rest of the men. I may be mistaken; there might be nobody in there and the lights left burning, but we won't take chances."

"But you're liable to get kilt," Cassidy remonstrated in a hoarse undertone. "Let me hold 'em off and——"

"Do as I say and give me the gun!" Fraser snapped, and Cassidy reluctantly complied.

As the officer disappeared down the hallway Fraser got down on hands and knees and tried to peer under the door, but could see nothing. He detected a faint noise of some kind, but was unable to determine what it was. Surely, if the robbers were in there, they were exceptionally quiet!

How long he lay there he did not know, but the faint sound still continued, when four men stole noiselessly toward him, a flashlight dancing its way in the van.

Fraser arose to his feet and, casting a quick glance behind him, placed his hand upon the knob and with infinite care began turning it in fractions of an inch. After a minute of breathless suspense he felt the door loose and then, with the same caution, began pushing it inward.

When it was open but a quarter of an inch he peered through the aperture. Within his confined range of vision he discovered that the chamber before him was a bedroom, but no living soul could he see. He pushed it open a bit farther, and now beheld part of a marble mantel, a large section of a bed, a dresser and an oval picture hung upon a wall papered with roses. Still, there was no evidence of occupation.

Holding his revolver in readiness, Fraser now gave the door a swift push and braced himself for the ordeal, whatever it might be.

As his eyes took in the entire room his arm fell to his side and a cry of astonishment escaped his lips. And from each of the four men behind him came exclamations of amazement and chagrin.

For in the center of the room behind a small wooden table sat an elderly woman of very refined bearing and with silvery hair, busily engaged in writing. She looked up at the sound of their voices and instantly gave utterance to a scream.

"Madam!" Fraser stepped forward, at the same time hiding his gun. "I assure you that there must be some mistake here. We wish you no harm. We are officers of the law!"

"Officers of the law!" she gasped, looking fearfully from one to the other. "What have I done, pray, that you must needs

hound an old woman in the privacy of her own room?"

"Why, why," Fraser continued lamely, "we're after a band of robbers who have been making this place their rendezvous. Didn't you see or hear them?"

"Mercy, no!" the lady returned, horrified. "I can hardly believe such an absurd story."

"But—but"—Fraser was trying to pierce the fog of mystery that surrounded him—"are you the owner of this house?"

"I most certainly am," she returned with some asperity. "I am Mrs. Cole-Williams and just returned from Europe this afternoon with my maid. She is upstairs at present. Due to some awkward mistake, my caretaker failed to get the telegram which I sent him apprising him of my intended return, and he was not here to meet me. I cannot understand where he is, and it is a decided nuisance with everything boarded shut. Why, I shall smother!"

"Permit me, ma'am," Cassidy spoke up, and elbowed his way to the front. "I'll be the man that'll knock them boarrds away for ye!"

He did not wait for permission, but strode over, raised the window and began a violent attack upon the boards with his foot. One of the other officers also lent his assistance, and in a short while the boarding fell away.

Mrs. Cole-Williams picked up her pencil and continued her writing.

"That is very good of you," she remarked, "and now will you all kindly leave me? I really believe you must have entered the wrong house. Oh, these lead pencils! I wish I had my ink here."

She picked up a small, dainty knife and began sharpening her pencil, while Fraser watched her with sudden fascination, and the rest of the men began backing out of the room. They had just cleared the doorway when Fraser turned toward them with the words:

"Wait a minute! We'll have to investigate this a little further."

He walked over toward the woman.

"Do you mind if I see what you're writing?" he ventured.

"Why, the very impudence!" she exclaimed. "Well, if you insist, come and look at it, if it will do you any good."

"Come here, inspector," Fraser spoke. "I want a witness."

While the others stood about with mystified expressions Fraser bent over the table. Then, with a movement as sudden as it was unexpected, he grasped both her hands in his.

"Get hold of her hair and pull, inspector," he rapped out.

"What!" Inspector Standish glared at him. "Are you crazy, Fraser?"

"No, do as I say, or I'll do it myself!"

It was Fraser's reputation alone that induced the inspector to comply half-heartedly, for the private investigator was never known to make a useless move. Uncomprehending, he placed his hands lightly upon the silvery hair of the old woman, who was now shrieking in a frenzy, and gathering up courage, gave a slight tug. The result was astounding.

A silvery wig clung to the inspector's fingers! Short, black hair was revealed by his sudden action.

"Now the dress!" Fraser spoke quickly. "And watch that cupboard door, you fellows!"

Inspector Standish ripped off the black satin dress, and as a snake crawls forth from its discarded skin so did this human reptile stand forth—a man, with the habiliments of a woman lying at his feet. In a thrice he was handcuffed, and not a moment too soon, for the door of the cupboard flew open and six men dashed out, shooting as they broke into the room. The officers returned their fire with savage interest, and the skirmish was hot, but brief. Superior shooting on the part of the inspector's men turned the tables, and the thieves were subjugated and handcuffed after a severe struggle, in which both sides were wounded, one of the robbers fatally.

Simeon Geiger sneered as his eyes encountered Fraser's.

"Jimmy Optic makes a pretty good woman, don't he! We had this all doped out long ago, but we didn't think you'd get the upper hand. There's one consolation,

though. The jewels are gone. You'll never see them. Joe Gag, the caretaker, took them with him, and he slipped out of a cellar window while you dubs were congratulating yourselves that all the doors were bolted from the inside."

Fraser's brows met in sudden discomfiture.

"Yes, but Joe Gag changed his mind and came back," came a strange, cracked voice, and every one wheeled to gaze into the face of a small, wizened man with brilliant black eyes and a general hump-backed appearance.

"I'm Joe Gag," he said, looking at Fraser. "I'm caretaker here, and I also played sentinel for these dirty bums and let them have the use of the house because I needed the money, and they paid me well. I got out of the house all right, but when I saw the cordon of police stationed outside I figured I might just as well hand the jewels to you as to let them take them away from me. I was caught either way."

He handed the small chamois bag to Fraser, who glanced inside.

"By the way," the latter spoke, "who was it that switched off the lights to-night?"

Joe Gag grinned.

"It was me. I figured that with the lights off I could get in with that bunch and stand a chance of gettin' some of the precious stones for myself. Well, I jumped into the scramble all right, but I only got a lot of hard knocks for my pains. I managed to slip out of the room before Geiger switched on the lights. Then, when the police came pounding on the doors, they figured that I could slip away with the bag better than the whole bunch of them and I could return it to them later."

Fraser drew out a handful of gems, which scintillated on the palm of his hand, to the admiration of all who beheld them.

"All the fellows who swiped any of the stones in the scramble," Gag continued, "returned them to me just before I beat it, as they didn't want to run the risk of being caught with the goods on them, if they should be unlucky enough to be caught. That old woman trick of theirs was rehearsed a good many times, so that they would be ready in case of an emergency."

"Well"—Fraser drew the bag shut—"I guess you're as guilty as the rest of the crew, but I'll leave that to the inspector to decide."

Inspector Standish drew Fraser over to one side.

"What made you suspicious of the woman?" he questioned.

"The way she sharpened her pencil," the other laughed. "Jimmy Optic!" He turned to address that individual. "You overlooked a point there. Did you ever see a woman sharpen a pencil toward herself?"

A POISONED KISS

A POISONED kiss is believed to have resulted in the deaths of Stella Ziesloft and Harry Devine, servants at the Summer estate of Carolina Sinkler, wealthy Philadelphia artist, who died almost in each other's arms at Miss Sinkler's summer home at Eastern Point recently.

County authorities believe the woman, holding the man in her embrace, kissed him with her own poisoned lips because she was determined to die and kill him in order that another woman should not have him.

District Attorney Howard Donnell, however, directed State detectives to begin an investigation along a line that a third person might have placed a poison cup for both victims.

Dr. William F. Boos, Harvard toxicological expert, will make an analysis to determine the exact nature of the poison.

A bottle of whisky, at first believed to have been the container for the poison, is held for examination, but the fact that four persons drank from it and only two were affected strengthens the official theory of poisoned lips.

Crime Detection in Egypt

By CARL H. GETZ

MENTION Egypt to the man on the street and he will immediately think of ancient Egyptian kings whose names defy both spelling and pronunciation and whose treasured possessions were buried with them. Mention Egypt to the criminologist who keeps informed with progress made in his profession in this country and abroad, and he will immediately think of the marvelous accomplishments of the Governmental Analytical Laboratory and Assay Office at Cairo. The work of that office in detecting crime and in unearthing evidence with which to convict criminals will compare well with the schools of criminology maintained by the police of the nations of continental Europe.

Take the analysis of projectiles for firearms, such as bullets, slugs and small shot, for example. A common problem of criminologists is to determine from what firearm a bullet found in a human body was fired. To illustrate further with some actual cases taken from the Cairo police records:

Some white metal adhering to a piece of lead with which a man had been shot, but fortunately not wounded, was found not to be nickel, as was first supposed, and which would have indicated a nickel-coated bullet. but silver from a cigarette case which had been penetrated. A night watchman suspected of the crime escaped conviction because the projectile did not agree in composition with the slugs in the cartridges with which he was supplied.

Take another case:

A man, who was suspected of wounding another by shooting, escaped conviction because the shot from the cartridge seized in his house was found on chemical analysis to differ in composition from the shot extracted from the wounded man, the former containing a comparatively large amount of tin and the latter containing no tin, but a trace of antimony.

Still another:

In a somewhat similar case to the one just mentioned a night watchman shot at some unknown persons suspected to be thieves, who, however, all escaped. In the morning blood was found on the ground, and subsequently a man was arrested with a shot wound in his leg, for which he failed to give any satisfactory explanation. Analysis, however, proved that the lead extracted from the wound did not agree in composition with the slugs in the watchman's cartridges, and consequently the man was released. The impurities present in the lead were the same in each case and consisted chiefly of antimony, but the shot from the wound contained much less antimony than the slugs.

Two slugs found in the house of a person accused of murder by shooting agreed in composition with the lead extracted from the brain of the victim.

The Egyptian police have displayed extraordinary skill in the examination of clothing. Here is one of the most famous cases on record:

A waistcoat was submitted with a request that it might be examined for clues concerning the immediate history of the owner, who was discovered under suspicious circumstances near the Suez Canal during the war of 1914-1918. The following facts, which appeared significant, were found:

The waistcoat was clean, in good condition, and looked almost new.

The bone button of an inner pocket bore

a name which was probably that of a tailor and the address was Batavia.

One of the pieces of cloth of which the lining was formed bore a portion only of a stain—probably due to perspiration—which ceased abruptly at a seam where two separate pieces of the lining joined and was not present on the other side of the seam, but was continued on the turned-down edge where the first piece of material was folded in order to sew it to the second.

The waistcoat was impregnated, both at the top and bottom, with chlorides, sulphates and compounds of calcium, magnesium and potassium. These naturally were not visible, but portions of the waistcoat were soaked in distilled water, and the solutions thus obtained examined chemically. These salts are all characteristic of sea-water. The magnesia, too, was present in greater proportion than the lime, which is also a characteristic of sea-water. It should not be forgotten, however, that these same salts occur in the sand of the seashore, in the dust on any roads near the sea, and even in the sea air. They are found also in the dust of the desert, and hence on clothes that have been worn in the desert. Chlorides might be derived from perspiration. If, in addition to salts derived directly or indirectly from sea water, dust from limestone rocks, from a limestone road or from calcareous sand was present, this would change the original proportion of lime and magnesia, and so might obscure the origin of the salts.

Each pocket contained a small amount of very fine quartz sand with rounded grains of practically uniform size, which closely resembled dune sand.

The deductions from the above facts were as follows:

The owner of the waistcoat had bought a ready-made suit of clothes in Batavia. The stain proved that the lining had been used before, since evidently the stain had not been acquired while the lining was in its existing position, and the fact of the waistcoat being almost new pointed to ready-made clothes in which some old lining had been used rather than to a second-hand suit.

The man had traveled to Egypt in a Dutch steamer, since Dutch steamers were then passing through the Suez Canal and were the only ones that called at Batavia.

The man had left the steamer surreptitiously while it was passing through the canal and had swum to the shore. Entire submersion, which pointed to swimming, was indicated by the fact that even the top of the waistcoat showed evidence of having been wetted with salt water, and it followed therefore that the mode of leaving the steamer was unusual and probably surreptitious.

The man had landed from the canal at a place where there were sand dunes. This was indicated by the nature of the sand found in the pockets.

The above conclusions were subsequently proved to be correct.

Here is another case taken from the records, which show the part that the analysis of clothing may play in the detection of crime:

An Egyptian dressed in European clothes, who had been killed by having his throat cut, was found in a garden. Round his neck there was tied a gallabia—a loose outer garment worn by both men and women of the poorer classes in Egypt—probably to soak up the blood, and lying near the body was a small piece which had been torn from the gallabia, on which, in addition to bloodstains, were black smears, marks of yellow material, much blackened, and patches of white metal in very thin layers. Analysis proved the black material to be carbon, the yellow to be resin blackened by carbon, and the metal to be plumber's solder. The small piece of material therefore had been used by a plumber for "wiping" a joint, and thus a valuable clue was afforded for the police to follow up.

There were also other clues; thus the nature of the pattern on the gallabia, which consisted of circles, indicated that the garment had belonged to a woman or girl, since men's gallabias are plain or striped and never have patterns of circles, spots or flowers, while women's gallabias, unless plain, possess these patterns and are seldom, if ever, striped. The gallabia had also a pleat

down each side of the upper part of the front, which again indicated a woman's or child's dress, and was very much torn at the front and had a patch of different material inserted from inside in order to mend one of the torn places.

The Egyptian police are remarkably adept in analyzing documents. Chemists have examined paper, analyzed ink and discolorations and stains for the sole purpose of finding clues or tangible evidence with which to convict. And some remarkable results have been obtained. For example:

In several instances letters enclosed in envelopes, which have been submitted in support of cases, have been found on examination to be fraudulent, a genuine envelope with a postmark of the required date having been obtained, and a letter forged to accompany it. Forgeries of this kind may generally be exposed by a difference in the nature or age of the ink or by a difference in handwriting. In one case a grease stain, going through the envelope from front to back, did not occur on the letter; in other instances the envelopes have been mutilated.

Some one has described dirt as "matter in the wrong place." The Egyptian police learned long ago that an analysis of "dirt" could mean much to the success in the prosecution of a criminal case. To illustrate:

Some sand found in the pockets of the waistcoat mentioned in connection with the Suez Canal case proved to be extremely fine quartz sand with well-rounded grains of uniform size similar to dune sand, and from this it was concluded that the wearer of the waistcoat had been in a locality where there were sand dunes.

Sand taken from the barrel of a gun was proved to be identical with the sand from the place where the crime had been committed, and of which the owner of the gun was suspected. The value of this fact, however, was discounted by the further fact that similar sand could be found in many other localities, but in connection with the particular circumstances of the case the fact was of value

A safe had been robbed, the door having been bored through, and some of the finely powdered material used as a fireproof packing between the two walls of the safe was scattered about the room. This was found to be entirely mineral, to be free from fibres and organic matter, and to contain a number of small rounded particles of various colors, which manifestly had been fused and which were very characteristic. Some dust found on the clothes and between the fingers of two persons suspected of robbery was identified as consisting of this same material, and the men were convicted.

The Egyptian police have a chemico-legal expert who makes explosives his specialty. This is typical of the cases he has to work with:

In the case of the bombs thrown at various Egyptian ministers during 1919 and 1920 it was possible from an examination of the fragments to say exactly what the bombs had been and to follow the progress of evolution of the different types used. Thus in the first few bombs made, which were found by the police before they were used, the casing consisted of a long cylinder of thin galvanized iron. The cylinder was then made smaller and three bombs of this smaller kind were employed, the casing, however, in one instance being tinned iron in place of galvanized iron. After this the type was changed, and a small bomb with a thick iron casing was used. Portions of six such bombs, differing slightly in size, but identical in construction, were examined.

All the bombs contained iron nuts or pieces of iron rod as projectiles, but the fragments of the casing itself in the last type used made much more dangerous projectiles and frequently weighed between 100 and 200 grams each, and in one instance a single piece weighed 362 grams. The explosive material was picric acid in every case, and there was no detonator or fuse, the explosion being initiated by the action of strong sulphuric acid upon potassium chlorate. The acid was contained in a small open or loosely closed bottle fixed upright in the case, and the explosion took

place when the bomb was inverted, and not on impact, most of the bombs exploding in the air. Although fortunately none of these bombs hit or hurt the minister at whom they were aimed, the motor-car in which he was traveling was seriously damaged on several occasions. One man was killed, a number of others were wounded, and some slight injury was done to property in the vicinity of the explosions. Other and larger bombs of the same type were subsequently found by the police and were examined.

Fibres is another subject of interest to the Egyptian criminologist. On the wax seal impression on an envelope which figured in a case of robbery a few tiny black-looking fibres were found which proved to be dark-blue wool and to correspond exactly with the material of the frayed edge of the turned-up sleeve of the coat of one of the persons employed by the firm who had been robbed. This man, however, had possibly helped to seal up the envelope in the first instance.

The Egyptians have made considerable use of radiography, that is, photography by means of X-rays, in determining the nature of the contents of closed packages, such as bombs, which it is not desirable to open, and there are also many other ways in which it can be of service in criminal investigation.

It is doubtful whether there are many countries in the world where chemistry plays as important a part in the detection of crime as it does in Egypt. The results obtained through chemical analysis are frequently circumstantial, but they also succeed often in breaking down the stand of suspects. The police of America could well afford to become thoroughly familiar with the methods and accomplishments of the Egyptian police.

GIRL FOOLS A THUG

BY hiding a $500 payroll in her clothes and carrying in her hand a dummy package, Rose Cohen, 27, of 498 Madison street, New York City, bookkeeper and cashier for the Gem Art Jewelry Company of 121 Canal street, Manhattan, frustrated a holdup the other day when a bandit struck her over the head with a piece of pipe and ran off with the bogus money.

The man, who was captured while attempting to escape, described himself as Harry Cohen, 27, of Bath Beach.

Miss Cohen identified the man as one who had formerly worked in the same building with her and had known of her custom to get the payroll from the bank every Saturday.

She said that after reading of the many holdups that have been taking place recently she hit upon the plan of concealing the real package of money in her sleeve and carrying several old notebooks wrapped in paper in her hand instead.

After drawing the $500 from the Chatham and Phoenix National Bank, Grand st. and the Bowery, Miss Cohen returned to 121 Canal st. and went to the eighth floor to get some rings she had left to be engraved for her firm.

She told the police that it was while descending to the seventh floor that Cohen struck her from behind with the lead pipe, seized the dummy package and tried to escape.

Patrolman Pinken of the Clinton st. station, who was attracted by the girl's screams, captured him as he was attempting to make a get-away across the roof.

Miss Cohen smiled when telling her story and said that it was lucky for her that her assailant's aim had been poor when swinging the pipe.

As it was, she did not entirely escape injury and had three stitches taken in her head by an ambulance surgeon from the Gouverneur Hospital.

The Phantom Fingerprint

By FREDERICK C. DAVIS

CHAPTER ONE

THE desk sergeant dozed, cheek pressed against palm, as the solemn clock at headquarters ticked the thirty-fifth minute past a humid midnight. At a table outside the grating Detective John Brand sleepily read for the fourth time the rumpled sport page of a yesterday's newspaper. A green-shaded globe circled its light down upon the two tired policemen who had passed from one routine day of toil and were waiting for the inevitable beginning of the next.

In the midst of a wide yawn from Detective Brand the telephone on the desk jangled. The desk sergeant took up the disturbing instrument with a frown, while Brand eyed him with interest. There is always interest coupled with telephone calls which come crying into headquarters in the still hours of the morning.

"Hul-lo?" the sergeant asked gapily.

The receiver throbbed wordlessly in his ear.

"Hul-*lo?"* he demanded a second time, a trifle exasperated.

No answer came. The desk sergeant frowned again, this time savagely. He kept the deceitful receiver to his ear, still listening.

"What is it, sergeant?" Detective Brand asked curiously from the table.

"Nothin'! *Hul*-lo!"

"I suppose some practical joker is——"

Brand bit off his words at the sight of the fat body of the desk sergeant, suddenly stiffening as the man sat bolt upright with the receiver clamped against his ear, while the color drained slowly from his face, leaving it ashen. With the transmitter of the instrument pressed tightly against his heaving chest, he stared, as if he saw an apparition, at Detective Brand outside the grating.

Then he burst into alertness. The strange message coming over the wire had abruptly ended. The sergeant clattered the phone book frantically, keeping up an anxious running fire of "H'lo! H'lo! H'lo!" the while. Suddenly his face brightened at the sound of a voice, only to relapse into disappointment when he discovered that it was Central telling him there was no one on the line.

"What is it, sergeant?" Detective Brand demanded, stepping to the desk.

"It's something enough! Over that phone just then I heard a man's dying words!"

"Is this a joke, Hennessy?"

"Joke? You'll think it's no joke when I tell you who it was that called up here. Listen! He told me this—his voice was weak, like he was goin': 'Burglar in next room—stabbed me——' Then I couldn't hear any more."

"Who was it?"

"It was good old Huxton!"

"Wha-at!"

"It was old Huxton, bless his soul."

"Hennessy, if you're joking, now is the place to stop! You don't mean to tell me that that call came from Henry Huxton. You must be mistaken! Why, the old gentleman wouldn't harm a fly. Nobody in the world would want to rob *him!"*

"Stop your gabbin' and get out o' here! I'm tellin' you exactly what I heard over that telephone. Now, get to that house, and get there right away! You know where he lives."

Accepting the situation without waiting to argue further, Detective Brand swung

out of the door and rushed toward the rear of the headquarters building, where the motor-cars were housed. As he sprinted down the cement corridor and burst into the garage he all but collided with a khaki-garbed individual who was coming out.

"Hullo, Brady," Brand gasped. "Come on, man; I need you. Old Huxton's run up against a burglar, and he's badly hurt!"

"Huxton?" Brady, the patrolman, exclaimed unbelievably. "Why——"

"No time to talk. Come on!"

Together they climbed into the headquarters automobile and sped over the black streets in the direction of the old philanthropist's home. With the car's siren shrieking its warning to late pedestrians and motorists alike, they jolted and jerked at reckless speed toward the house from which the singular telephone call had come.

Henry Huxton was known throughout the city as a man engaged in a lifework of doing good. As a giver he was famed beyond the limits of the State. No carrier of a deserving cause ever left his door without a goodly donation from him. He was a friend of the poor, expending his wealth in ways of goodness and kindness. Brand remembered that even as they were rushing toward Huxton's home one beaming minister was no doubt lying awake in anticipation of the sum of ten thousand dollars which Huxton intended presenting to him on the morrow toward the building of a new church.

They swept around an arc-lighted corner with dangerous speed. As they swerved there suddenly sounded the wild screeching of frantically applied brakes; the police car jerked, skidded and slid along the pavement, hurtling its occupants heavily forward. Within only a few inches of the police car another, larger one, creaked to a sudden halt. A very serious accident had been averted by rapidity of thought on the part of the two drivers.

"You blasted fool, didn't you hear the siren?" Patrolman Brady yelled at the other motorist.

"Sure I heard it, Brady, but I didn't know where it was coming from!"

At the mention of his name Brady started. He quickly turned his spotlight into the face of the driver of the other car.

"Doc Gifford!" the policemen exclaimed in duet.

"It is. Back from a midnight sick call. What's the rush?"

"Say, doctor," Detective Brand interposed, "you can help us. Just got word old Henry Huxton's been hurt by a burglar. Come along with us, will you? You might be the means of saving the old man."

"Certainly. Lead the way!"

In a moment the police car had jerked forward and again was screeching its way down the street with the doctor's larger and quieter car rolling in its wake. As they sped Brady leaned forward and whispered into Brand's ear, and in his voice there was still a note of anger: . . .

"That doctor's the wildest driver in the city, Brand. He's going to get into a terrible mess of an accident some day!"

The screeching of the siren swallowed Brand's reply. After an interval they neared the neighborhood of Huxton's residence and Brady shut off the siren's whirring. As they silently slid to the curb in front of the quiet, dark house the doctor brought up behind them. Together they clambered to the sidewalk.

Brand ran across the walk and onto the porch with his gun gripped in his hand. With the other two men close at his heels he paused at the entrance and listened, but could hear nothing. Then he cautiously pushed at the door. It swung open under the pressure of his fingers.

He stepped fearlessly inside. There he paused, groped at the wall for the electric switch and snapped on the current. The men blinked in the glare of light, which disclosed quiet, modern furnishings filling small, modest rooms. Stepping rapidly, Brand led the trio through the front part of the house and across the dining-room. At the door of the library he paused, aghast.

An overturned table-lamp grotesquely lighted the scene.

Stretched across the floor in a gruesome posture lay Henry Huxton. He was clad in a long, old-fashioned nightshirt. His

passive face was turned to the stained carpet, disclosing a back which was moist and shining in the light. It needed no second glance of the trained detectives to know that the best of Doctor Gifford's services were useless, for Huxton was undoubtedly dead.

A brief examination confirmed the deduction. Huxton was dead. He had been killed by repeated thrusts of a sharp-edged knife. The knife itself lay on the rug beside the body, coated with red. Brand turned to the doctor.

"Huxton is dead, doctor, as you see. A sneak thief broke in and stabbed him—stabbed this fine old gentleman for the sake of a few baubles in the house! What a dirty coward's deed! By gad, it makes my blood boil!"

"The man must have been insane—a maniac!" the doctor interjected emotionally.

Neither officer answered. Here, after a mad rush through the streets in an effort to protect the old gentleman, was what they found: the dead body of the state's greatest philanthropist, murdered by a petty-minded perverted burglar. Brady stood silent, appalled at the brutality of the deed, and Brand's clenched jaws evinced his violent resentment.

The latter stooped, and with a gingerly placed thumb and forefinger lifted the stained dagger from the rug. It was small, with a cylindrical ivory handle, but it was the hilt that caught and held the detective's fascinated attention.

"Look!" he said sharply. "Look at that fingerprint!"

To the wide eyes of the doctor and the narrowed ones of Brady he showed a clear, unblurred print of a finger on the handle of the dagger.

"It's a print of the murderer's finger!" Brand elatedly exclaimed. "Thank the Lord, we've got something to work on! We've got the murderer's fingerprint—and that's a mighty big step toward getting the murderer himself!"

He smiled grimly into Doctor Gifford's pale face and into Brady's drawn one.

CHAPTER TWO

DETECTIVE JOHN BRAND was more than uncommonly affected by the murder of Henry Huxton. He knew that the entire city would keenly feel the loss of the philanthropist, but he knew even better the hardships which would befall those crippled and ill of the slum regions whom Huxton had befriended and who would now be thrown upon their own unutilizable resources.

"I'm going to *get* the dirty dog that killed Huxton," John Brand stated determinedly. "I'll never rest until I bring him to justice."

With the coming of the coroner the three men piled into their cars again. The doctor was moody and silent, Brady now and then swore hotly under his breath, and Brand kept his own grim counsel. The nerves of the men were strained. The return to the police-station was at first slow. As the police car chugged over the streets with the doctor's purring motor lined beside it the siren was silent. As they progressed Brady, in his reaction from his intense indignation, unconsciously allowed his car to speed, and the doctor beside him kept tire to tire as they rushed.

Suddenly, without warning, the big automobile swerved. A heavy lurch of their car jolted the policemen back to their normal observation. A high-pitched yell of warning pealed from the doctor, followed by a terrific grinding and squeaking and crashing. Brady shouted hoarsely; Brand leaped to his feet. The doctor's big car had rushed against them, and, seemingly a gigantic thing taken on savage life of its own, turned and roared pell-mell straight into the smaller machine amid a splintering and crumpling, a groaning and shrieking. For one last vague moment Detective Brand heard again a terrorized cry from the doctor, then plunged into a deep, black void—into the nothingness of unconsciousness.

It seemed but a moment later that he opened his eyes again, but instead of looking at a dark sky, through splinters of wreckage, he stared at the mild green ceil-

ing of a hospital. He saw the unexpected with a sudden flutter of his eyelids. Yes, he *was* in a hospital, in a private room. A white-capped nurse was tinkling bottles and glasses on an enameled stand beside his bed. As he stared at her the nurse made a notation on her chart, smiled down at him, and asked if there was anything he wanted. There was nothing—except to know how he had come there.

"Coming around at last, heh, Brand?" a masculine voice asked from his other side.

He turned his head. Seated beside his bed were his companions of the motor-car collision. Doctor Gifford, with a cross of plaster covering a cut on the point of his chin and with one hand bandaged, grinned at him. Patrolman Brady extended his left hand forward, since his right, broken, hung in front of him.

Beside these two men sat Richard Bentley, a young physician whom Brand remembered as a student of Gifford's—an assistant taking his pay in practice. He silently watched Brand as Gifford explained:

"You've been unconscious six hours, Brand, but you're coming around all right now. Both cars were smashed beyond repair. As we were crossing the street I tried to avoid another auto which was coming at us, and my own car twisted out of my control. Then I hit you and you hit a tree. All three of us were smashed up more or less."

Brand demanded weakly: "What's the matter with me?"

"Don't move. Two ribs broken and a wrist smashed. Your left hand will be a little mussed up when we take off the bandages, but you're coming around all right. A few weeks here and you'll be back on your feet. Man, you don't know how near you came to checking out!"

"I'm blasted glad I didn't," Brand stated evenly through thinned lips. "I'm blasted glad I didn't. I couldn't face St. Peter without having caught the dirty dog who killed Huxton. I've got his fingerprint, and I'm going to make him pay for that crime if it's the last thing in the world I do!"

CHAPTER THREE

WHEN Detective John Brand was able to walk again, to breathe without pain, and to use his crushed left hand, he began his hunt for the owner of the fingerprint which he had found on the dagger in Huxton's room.

The hunt for that fingerprint began as a fixed determination and became an obsession with him. He photographed the smudged handle of the knife and made enlargements of the photo. These he sent to the largest prisons and penitentiaries in the country, asking that a duplicate print be hunted in their files. Day after day for hours at a time he searched through the records of his own headquarters in efforts to find its replica. The fruit of his hours of poring over the records was decisive; no criminal's recorded fingerprints corresponded with the print on the knife handle.

The print was one of a thumb. Through scanning it countless times its every line became impressed on Brand's mind in a never-dimming image. He knew every quirk, every pore, every slight curve of the lines which traced the distinguishing whorl that singled it from millions. He could call the image up before his eyes and view it as clearly as though it were projected on a screen in front of him. In his mind, ever and always, was that thumbprint. He had given over his professional life to finding it, for that person could be no other than the man who had murdered that lovable old gentleman, Henry Huxton.

Failing locally, Brand began a world-wide search. He sent photo-engravings of the enlarged print to all bureaus listed. He asked that they compare it with the hundreds of thousands of records on file at each office and to communicate with him as soon as they found the slightest data in regard to its owner. One by one the replies came in from prisons, bureaus and penitentiaries over the entire country. Each answer was in substance the same:

"We have here no print in our files which agrees with the specimen you submit."

Then, more than ever, the hunt became

the biggest thing in Brand's professional life. He rose from his job as under-detective to be appointed finally chief, but still his never-failing zeal to track the murderer of Huxton continued to urge him in the chase.

And soon Brady, who had accompanied Brand that night of nights, pushed himself into the companion chair of chief of police. Brady also held something of Brand's never-flagging enthusiasm to find the murderer of Huxton. But in the latter it reached its climax.

In his vest pocket now, as chief of detectives, Brand always carried with him a tiny tin box, in which compartments held small supplies of black powder and white, together with a small camel's-hair brush and some sheet gelatine, so that he might bring into visibility a fingerprint left on any object he might encounter. At dinners, at conferences, at the public library, he brought his box of powders into use. Men had even found him powdering the prints left by his own detectives. He had given orders that every man brought into headquarters on any charge whatsoever must submit to the taking of his fingerprints, and although this order was obeyed without exception, no man was ever brought into the station with a thumb which gave the print impressed on Brand's memory.

For seven years John Brand vainly hunted that elusive trail. Nowhere was he able to find a print resembling that which the murderer had left on the knife in Henry Huxton's room. Others forgot the murder of the old gentleman, but Brand remembered it as vividly at the end of seven years as he had at the end of seven days. He had sworn to apprehend Huxton's killer, and the sole clue to the criminal—his only chance of success—lay in that persistently elusive print of a thumb.

Brand's hair grayed, and his body softened and fattened with age, but in his mind the grim determination he had formed grew stronger day by day.

In his office Chief of Detectives John Brand idly fingered a letter from the penitentiary at Leavenworth, stating that, although for the third time they had thoroughly searched their files, they could find no fingerprint resembling that which Chief Brand had submitted.

With a sigh he removed from his vest pocket the little box of white and black powders with its camel's-hair brush and gazed at it whimsically. Quite idly, his thoughts astray, he leaned forward and dusted a bit of powder on a corner of his redwood desk. He smeared the powder thoughtlessly as he sighed again. Then, recalling himself, he snapped the box shut and moved to relace it, but paused when he noticed that on the corner of the desk, brought out by the powder, a fingerprint had appeared.

He leaned forward with idle interest, then with an exclamation of unbounded surprise sprang to his feet, staring with round eyes at the telltale mark.

There was no denying it! There was no doubt of it! There, on the corner of his own desk, was a print of *the* thumb—of the very thumb he had been hunting for seven years!

It was precisely the same print which he had found on the handle of the dagger which had killed Henry Huxton.

The chief sank into his chair overwhelmed. He stared in blank amazement at the print. Then he abruptly arose and strode to the door.

"Brady!" he called. "Brady!"

Brady's glance, as he entered from his adjoining office, was curious. He could not remember when Brand's tone had been so emotional. As he approached the red-faced chief of detectives he too saw the print on the desk.

"What's that?" he asked.

"That? That's *the* print!"

"What!"

"Exactly, Brady! After chasing all over the country for seven years, trying to trace that fingerprint, I find it right here, in my own office, on my own desk!"

"Are you sure?"

"Am I sure? Certainly I'm sure! I know every line of that print. The one here on my desk is exactly the same as that I found on the dagger that killed Huxton. Here; compare them yourself."

From a drawer Brand produced a photograph of the dagger-handle which bore the original print and handed it to Brady. The latter thoughtfully compared the print in the photograph with the smudge on the desk and straightened slowly.

"You're right," he said. "You're right. They're exactly the same."

"I knew it. I knew it. Now, sit down."

Brady drew a chair and looked into a strangely set face. The expression was unfamiliar to him. He sat back, puzzled.

"Brady, how did that print get on my desk?" Brand asked coolly.

"Why, I'm sure I don't know."

"Well, let me tell you something. This morning I was in here when the janitor polished that desk. None of my men has been in here since then. In fact, nobody has been in here since the janitor cleaned—except you."

Brady smiled. "You don't think that *I* killed——"

"Just a moment. For seven years I've been hunting the dirty crook who killed Huxton, and I intend to get him. For seven years I have tried to get a duplicate of that thumbprint and failed. And now the thing I've been hunting appears in my own office—and we have been its only occupants. Brady, what can I think?"

Brady's smile faded.

"I remember that night seven years ago as well as I remember last evening," Brand continued slowly. "That strange telephone call came in. I rushed out a moment later. I met you coming in. How do I know that you hadn't been over at Huxton's house? Can't you see——"

"Brand, you're getting to be a fool! You're letting this thing grow on you. I don't know how in the world that fingerprint came on your desk, but I do know that I didn't put it there—and that your deductions are absurd."

"And how can you *prove* they are absurd?"

"Very easily. Here are my ten fingers. Please make a print of every one of them."

Brand acted on this suggestion immediately. Out from his desk came a glass slab, on which he put a dab of ink, rolled and spread it, and placed Brady's fingers upon it. Then, very carefully, he pressed the blackened fingers of the chief of police upon a white card. As Brady wiped his hands the detective studied the ten impressions through a magnifying-glass. He had no need of a copy of the original print; it was stamped on his memory too indelibly. For a scant moment he studied the prints of Brady's fingers.

Then he arose and extended a hand. The police chief took it tightly and good-naturedly returned the detective's smile.

"I guess you're right, old man. I'm an old fool. I'm letting this thing run away with me. I don't know how that thumbprint came on the corner of my desk, but I do know this: none of your ten fingerprints resembles it even slightly."

CHAPTER FOUR

A NEW and complicating factor entered into Chief Brand's dogged search for the phantom fingerprint. Whereas he had searched for seven years without finding a duplicate of the original, he now found them anywhere and everywhere. The identical print for which he hunted he found three or four times daily, upon door-jambs, on sheets of paper, on drinking glasses! After a drought of seven years it literally rained fingerprints, all of which were exact duplicates of the one found on the weapon of murder!

Seated in a restaurant, the detective chief was about to take up his knife when he suddenly started. Upon the handle he found a clearly defined thumbprint, identical with the one of his search! He called the waiter, grimly told him a gun rested in his hip pocket holster only a fraction of a second away from its position to kill, and with a cowed foreigner seated opposite, forced him to press his left thumb on the clean edge of a platter.

The man protested volubly against Brand's procedure. He maintained that at the time of the crime he had not yet come to America. But nevertheless Chief Brand

brought out his box of powders and made visible the print on the platter. He compared it with the image in his mind. The upshot was that he was obliged to profusely apologize to the waiter and to tip him extravagantly, because the print did not resemble in the slightest degree the original on the handle of the dagger.

Such were Brand's experiences with the elusive fingerprint. Having found it on his own desk and in a restaurant, he discovered it also on the knob of the door which opened into his office. It was on a drinking-glass which was kept beside the ice-water tank at headquarters. The prints, he knew, testified only one thing—that the man whose thumb made them had been inside his office, had eaten at the same table, and had even frequented headquarters!

For a week the shower of fingerprints continued. Brand began to doubt his rationality. He confided his thoughts to Brady, who reassured him:

"You're seeing things. You've got that impression stamped so deeply on your mind you see it every time you look at any print at all."

"Very well," Brand replied. "I'll prove that I see what I see. There on the doorknob is a powdered thumbprint. Look at it and compare it with the original in this photograph."

A few minutes of examination sufficed for Brady. He shook his head in bewilderment.

"You're right again. They are identical."

"That means just one thing—the person who killed Huxton has been in my office, he may have used the same knife, have drank from the same glass. Man, it's maddening! After seven years he suddenly appears all around me, and I can't find him!"

Try as he might, Chief Brand could not locate the owner of the thumb which duplicated the incriminating print. Man after man accused proved his innocence simply and easily. Additional gray hairs lined the chief's already whitening thatch. He became visibly nervous.

He grew to look upon the print in a new light. "Is it possible that this print is made by a phantom being from another world?" he thought irrationally. "Can *that* be?"

Then he shook his grayed head in bewilderment and confessed himself utterly baffled.

And then came the climax. In his home one evening he saw a smudge on the looking-glass of the medicine cabinet. Hastily he applied his powders and made the amazing discovery that here in his own house was another duplicate of that phantom fingerprint!

CHAPTER FIVE

IT was a tired and worn Chief Brand who came down to headquarters the following morning.

He shut himself in his office, and without ado slumped down in his revolving chair and stared unseeingly at a photograph on his desk. This affair had grown beyond him.

He knew that no one had been in either his office or his home during the interval between the discovery of the two prints.

He plunged deep into meditation. For half an hour the clock on his desk ticked busily while he sat lost in thought. Once a knock sounded on his door, but he did not stir. The knock was repeated. Finally the knocker walked away without the chief's having moved.

The half-hour merged into an hour and the hour into two, while he slumped in his chair and mentally strove to pierce the fog that surrounded the myriad baffling fingerprints.

Finally he arose, paced the length of his office a dozen times, and then sat down again, his face cleared of its heavy scowl. He moved alertly, pushed his pudgy hands into a drawer of his desk and took out his glass slab, roller, and cards. He inked the slab, moistened his thumbs with the sticky film, and took his own print. Wiping his hands, he stared at the result. Then he walked to the door of Brady's office.

"Come here!" he shouted; "I've found the murderer!"

It was an astounded Brady who confronted Brand a moment later.

"What's that? Say that again!"

"I say I know who killed Huxton," the detective repeated grimly.

"You don't mean—you can't mean—that after these seven years you've learned who killed Huxton!"

"I have. There's no doubt of it."

Brand crossed to his desk, while the other eyed him with mingled curiosity and incredulity.

"Look here, Brady," he stated slowly, taking up the card on which he had pressed his thumbs. "See, here is a perfect duplicate of the print found on the dagger which killed Huxton—a perfect duplicate."

A brief examination caused his companion to nod his agreement.

Then, before Brady's unbelieving eyes, Brand pressed his blackened left thumb beside the print on the card and grimly handed it to him.

"Compare 'em, Brady! Do a good job!"

He did so, and he looked up after his second comparison, utterly breathless.

"Great Scott!" he barked. "They're exactly the same!"

"Yes," Brand nodded, "they're exactly the same. The print I have been hunting for seven years—the print on the dagger that killed Huxton—was made by the thumb of my own left hand. By the thumb—of—my—own—left—hand!"

Chuckling grimly to himself, he held the scarred thumb before his narrowed eyes.

CHAPTER SIX

"THAT—why, that's impossible, Brand!" Brady protested.

"No, it's true. There's the testimony of your own eyes to prove it."

"But *you* didn't kill Huxton!"

"No, I didn't kill Huxton, of course."

"Then who——"

"Stop gabbing, Brady! Follow me."

The detective pushed his cap over his grayed head and, without explaining, led his friend from the headquarters building. Silently and determinedly he walked up the street, his eyes gleaming hard. He halted before an office building scarcely two blocks away, Brady following puzzledly. They mounted in the elevator to the fifth floor. Once in the corridor, Brand led him straight to a door on which was lettered a familiar name.

He stepped quickly inside, walked through an empty ante-room, and without ado swung open the door to the inner office.

Two men inside whirled at the intrusion. Brand laughed caustically, and Brady saw to his amazement that the detective was leveling his automatic at Doctor Gifford and his assistant, Bentley!

"Well, Gifford, we walked in on you, heh?" Brand stated tartly. "You've got something to tell us, haven't you?"

The physician stared stiffly at the intruders, then slowly allowed his body to relax. Bentley's eyes blazed fire.

"No," Gifford mumbled when he had recovered from his shock of surprise, "I have nothing to tell you."

Brand sank into a chair, but the gun in his white-knuckled hand did not waver. Brady could only gape.

Bentley stared fixedly at the grim-faced chief of detectives, who now began the grueling that was backed up by all frustrated investigations of years. No culprit ever had the third degree applied more forcibly. It was beyond human nature to withstand the attack for any duration of time. Realizing that exposure was certain to follow, the doctor finally gave up his obstinate denials and slumped into a chair, pale and trembling.

"You've got me," he breathed. "Better play safe, Bentley. I know Brand. He's a bulldog."

"Cut the talk," Brand snapped. "Which of you killed Huxton? And which of you transferred——"

"I'll tell you everything," Gifford conceded.

"I took a big gamble, Brand—a big chance—and I lost.

"That unforgettable night, seven years ago, when Huxton was killed, I was a craven creature. A doctor fiddles with all

sorts of drugs, you know, and when he strikes a hard snag and things go dead wrong it's a temptation—difficult to keep away from them. They let you forget. That temptation was too much for me. I unwisely began to use them and continued until I all but wrecked my body and mind. My practice fell off. Delicate operations became impossible for me to perform. Finally all I had left was my job at the hospital. Well, that, coupled with my extravagant tastes, brought about the death of the man I was and the birth for the moment of the maniacal beast that killed Huxton.

"I knew that on the next day he was going to present some church or other with ten thousand dollars. I knew, too, that the old man's fancy always led him to offer his gifts in bright new currency of high denomination. I gambled on the probability of that ten thousand in cash being in the house the night preceding the presentation. I knew that Huxton usually kept goodly sums in his safe, anyway. In my unbearable state I planned to rob Henry Huxton.

"I was hardly aware of my actions. I broke into his house. Masked and armed, I forced him out of bed and into the library. At the point of my automatic I compelled him to open the safe. Then he tried to fight me off. He snatched up a paper-knife. We wrestled over it. He slashed himself. In order to avoid injury myself, I knocked him down.

"While I was helping myself to the currency in the safe Huxton, unknown to me, crawled into the next room and phoned the police. I caught him at it. He fought madly and in the fight my mind momentarily gave way and I snatched up the paper-knife. I shudder to remember those mad moments. In a few moments Huxton was dead. I had killed him.

"Enough of my sanity remained to allow me to remember that the police would rush down to the place at any instant. I shut the safe and let myself out the door. I ran to the next block, climbed into my car, and started off. Several corners on I met you coming in the police car. Would you suspect? I resolved to play the part of an innocent bystander and, doing that, I concocted a story of having been out on a sick case and went back to the house with you.

"Brand, the mind in crises is capable of absorbing shocks. When you found my fingerprint on the handle of that dagger I all but went raving mad. With a tremendous effort I kept myself under creditable control, although inside I was seething with terror.

"When our cars crashed together in that automobile accident Fate played into my hand. Both of you were injured seriously enough to make it necessary to carry you to the hospital at which I was employed. I, too, was injured, but only slightly. You, Brand, were knocked unconscions. And seeing you lying unconscious there on the table, my mind began to grope for a way out of my unbearable situation in which arrest seemed imminent. And in the moments which followed I perfected a cunning scheme wherein I would apparently lose my guilt. It was diabolically ingenious—you'll admit that!

"It was a shrewd scheme. Bentley will describe it, because he knows it even better than I do.

"For these seven years my clever scheme has held. I little thought that some day you would find my secret. But during part of those years I have thoroughly enjoyed eleven thousand and five hundred dollars which I removed from Huxton's safe. And that's all, Brand."

The detective glared at Bentley.

"All right, begin! Gifford has explained who killed Huxton, but he hasn't thrown any light on what is to me a bigger mystery. I mean that fingerprint. Man, speak up!"

"Very well," Bentley conceded carelessly. "You no doubt remember that auto accident vividly, Brand. As Gifford said, Fate played into his hand then. During the hours you were unconscious following the accident, do you know what transpired?

"Gifford's fingerprint was carefully wiped from the handle of the knife and your thumb pressed against it. The impression was dusted from your powder-box and later photographed at headquarters, with the result you know.

"Oh, yes; Gifford paid me handsomely for my silence. That's all there is to it. It's a huge joke, isn't it?"

Brand arose, glowering. "Joke, heh? You two will not think it's much of a joke, you dirty rats, when you face a jury!" He grinned triumphantly into the drawn faces of these two criminals. For he knew that his seven-year quest for the phantom fingerprint was ended.

SMUGGLING OPIUM

IT was during the administration of John E. Wilkie that a despatch was received in the Washington office of the secret service calling attention to the persistence of the opium smuggling in and around Seattle. Operative Frank Burke was detailed to make an investigation and report to headquarters at once.

He satisfied himself that the drug was being brought in from British Columbia, and in such a way as to elude the vigilance of the customs inspectors. Burke had a number of men assigned to assist him, and together they lay in wait at the least frequented wharves of Seattle—wharves where no inspectors were on duty. As a result of this he found that a trim little boat called the *Hyak* was making frequent trips between Seattle and Victoria. Also she made it a point to land at night.

The detective, putting two and two together, learned that the *Hyak* was owned by a rather prominent citizen named Stevens, and that Stevens was frequently in the company of William Cree and Alfred Larson, who were not so well known. The three of them were shadowed for several days, and the detective discovered that the *Hyak* was to make a special trip on a certain night and was to arrive at the usual landing-place. Burke was there to meet the craft with three or four husky fellows to back him up in case of need. At the appointed hour the *Hyak* steamed into port, her headlight flashing fitfully against the banks of cloud.

The secret service men hid behind a pile of friendly boxes and saw Stevens, Cree and Larson unload a piano and carry it into a frame house near the wharf. Some other odds and ends were taken off the boat, but there were no signs of anything that even remotely resembled opium. The officers were plainly disappointed. Burke was not. He said:

"While there's life there's hope, boys. Just follow me."

He walked into the frame house with the others at his heels. The place was lit by a couple of oil lamps and was sparsely furnished. Stevens instantly recognized the secret service man, for he had actually been introduced to him on his arrival in Seattle.

"I'm sorry I'm not prepared to entertain," he said, "but if you'll come around some other night I'll try to make it agreeable for you."

"Oh, this is all right," was the good-natured reply. "You mustn't make company out of me."

Stevens suppressed an oath, but before he could say anything more the secret service man turned to him and, pointing to the piano, said:

"Play us a little ragtime, won't you."

"I don't play the piano," was the sulky response.

"You try it then, Bill," said Burke to his first assistant.

Without a word the other seated himself at the piano and began drumming on the keys. But not a sound came forth. Simultaneously Burke rushed over to the instrument and lifted the lid and looked in.

"It's just as I suspected," he announced, and then he shouted: "Arrest those men!"

There was a scuffle and a struggle, but in less than five minutes Stevens, Cree and Larson had been handcuffed and were ready for the local police. Burke returned to the piano and took off the lid and the sides, finding that it was fairly bulging with smuggled opium. The piano had been relieved of its wires and the case was merely a covering for the opium.

A Wife's Ransom

By ELMER J. WILLIAMS

CHAPTER ONE

WHEN one is approached on a well-lighted street among a goodly sprinkling of pedestrians by a dark, beautiful woman, who places in one's hands a sealed envelope, utters a few words in a low, musical voice, and then vanishes, leaving one standing, amazed and wondering——

When such an extraordinary incident occurs to an individual like myself, plain and verging on middle age, it is very apt to make one feel just as I did—extremely silly.

I was so dumfounded that I could only stand there and turn the envelope over and over, glancing self-consciously about to determine whether I had been the object of some prank. Evidently not. Passers-by gave me no notice.

I started to walk on, bewildered. I placed the letter in a pocket, took it out and then put it back again. I was so upset that I did not even read what was on its face.

What had the woman said? Yes, now the words went reeling through my brain: "A man's life depends upon the safe delivery of this letter. I hope you will do me that favor."

Preposterous! Silly! Once more I was certain that I had been made the victim of some practical joke. I glanced furtively about for the woman. She had vanished. Under a good light I took the letter out and read what was written on its face. This name and address was scrawled there:

"To Mrs. Earl Faskin,
120 Tennyson Court."

What did she mean by her words—"A man's life depends upon the safe delivery of this letter?" Things of that sort are apt to upset me. My nerves play me tricks. So puzzling an incident, and me, of all persons!

Suddenly a more cheerful thought struck me. When this singular incident occurred I was on my way to visit my good friend Jean Govieau. Sometimes of evenings I like to go up to his quaint rooms near Ashley Square for an hour's chat. Now Jean Govieau is the lover of everything strange and mysterious. He is a collector of curious volumes like myself, but otherwise our personalities are by no means parallel.

I am more prosaic, not inclined to take, as Govieau does, the viewpoint of the romancer and adventurer. His shelves are crowded with the lore of the occult, the bizarre and the weird, which are worthless indeed to my way of thinking, but which delight him. He is forever wrapt in some veiled problem and sometimes the discoveries are interesting.

Here at last, thought I, is a problem for Govieau which I will present to him myself. I know that my little adventure of the street would kindle his imagination and that he would seek an explanation for it.

Jean was delighted to see me. He was, as I expected he would be, curled up in one of his immense chairs, absorbed in some atrocious, mystical tale.

He immediately went to get some of his wine, which he knows I like, and when he returned I was holding the envelope to the light to examine it. I glanced up, for I knew that he was watching me, and I rather enjoyed the knowledge that something had

befallen me which would cause him to open his eyes.

"I have had a strange adventure," I began.

"Indeed?" I perceived instantly that Govieau's face showed a swift interest. Then I placed the envelope in his hands and narrated fully the facts surrounding my possession of it. As I spoke I could see a glow come into his eyes, which he dropped at intervals to study the envelope.

"And now," I concluded, "what do you make of it?"

For a moment my friend was silent; then he said:

"My dear Andrews, all I can make of it is that a tall woman, dark and beautiful—I believe those were your words—has entrusted with you this letter, which for some unknown reason she does not care to send by conventional messenger or through the mails. Except that you have lacked the gallantry to perform her wish, thereby placing a man's life in jeopardy, I make nothing at all of your envelope."

"I am convinced that it is a cheap hoax," I said. "I would suggest that the best way to dispose of it would be to place a stamp on it and drop it into a mail box."

Govieau eyed me severely.

"Andrews, have you no sense of duty?" he demanded. "I think that I have in the past expressed myself concerning your lack of imagination and courage, so I will not go into that. Do you want me to understand that you do not intend to deliver this letter in person?"

"I certainly do not," I answered.

"Consequently, then, the duty will fall upon me. However, my friend, since neither of us are obligated in any way to anybody, I think we have a right to examine this letter before delivering it."

I gasped.

"Do you mean to say that you are going to open it?"

"Such is my intention."

I was quite amazed. Govieau had absolutely no right to tamper with the letter. It might prove dangerous. I told him so.

"Besides," I added, "how are you going to open it if you intend to deliver it?"

He only smiled and a few moments later was busy holding the envelope over a little pot of steaming water. I confess that I was quite interested. Presently he lifted the envelope flap gently, slowly. Then he handed the letter to me.

"Now, Andrews, you may read it aloud."

I drew out a letter-size sheet of bond paper on which there was typewriting. I scanned it in silence and my heart clamored wildly.

"Well?" Govieau's voice broke in.

Then I read aloud as follows:

"MRS. EARL FASKIN: Your husband is held prisoner where it is useless for you to attempt to find him.

"He will not be harmed so long as you do not notify the police. Any effort to do so will be known immediately by us. Therefore the safest and wisest course for you it to appear at the side entrance of the B—— Building at 9:30 sharp to-morrow (Thursday) evening. Kindly have in your hand an envelope containing $15,000.

"You will be approached by a tall, dark woman carrying an umbrella with a jade handle. She will take the money from you. Unless $15,000 is thus delivered to us, your husband's body will be found in the river."

The startling letter was unsigned.

My friend and I stared at each other, speechless and amazed. At last Govieau said: "So you see, Andrews, this woman told you the truth."

"But why," I stammered, "was this thing given to me?"

"You will forgive me, old chap, but it is quite likely that you were chosen because of your harmless, trustworthy appearance. If this affair is not a joke, and I think it is not, the kidnappers no doubt felt that the letter would be safely delivered by you, if for no other reason than to appease your curiosity. It is very probable that they did not know who you are, and they were not aware, of course, that you are totally lacking in imagination."

I scorned this last thrust and asked: "Now, what are we to do?"

There was a light in Govieau's eyes that

I have seen there before—the expression of intense fascination. He was slightly flushed and drummed incessantly with his fingers.

"Providence has placed this affair in our hands," he answered. "I have not been so interested in years. Let me see the letter, please."

He took it from me and examined it in silence. At length he glanced toward the clock on the mantelpiece. The hour was 9.

"It is yet early," he remarked. "We must call on Mrs. Earl Faskin."

I was myself aroused to some degree of curiosity, so I prepared to accompany him as he hastily slipped out of his dressing robe and made ready for the street. He directed me to tuck the letter in my pocket.

In the street we hailed a cab and gave the driver the address, No. 120 Tennyson Court. My acquaintance with the city told me that the house was in an entirely respectable and somewhat fashionable quarter.

After some twenty minutes of riding, during which neither of us spoke—Govieau sat austerely and forbiddingly silent, his brow contracted thoughtfully—our cab came to a stop.

No. 120 Tennyson Court proved to be of an attractive Dutch colonial type, residence standing well back from the street, with a splendid terraced lawn in front, fringed by well-kept hedges. It was not pretentious, but was nevertheless imposing with its atmosphere of taste and refinement. Govieau ordered our chauffeur to wait, and we proceeded up the neat walk to the front door.

Our ring was answered by a maid servant with a sharp nose, sharper eyes and a lace cap. Govieau handed her his card and told her to inform Mrs. Faskin that two gentlemen wished to see her on a matter of importance. The girl disappeared, and a moment later a woman, slight of figure and extremely pale, appeared before us. After a bare moment's scrutiny she said: "I am Mrs. Faskin; you may come in."

As we entered the drawing-room we were better able to observe Mrs. Faskin. I guessed that she was not more than thirty and that, despite little careworn lines about her eyes, she was beautiful. She was, however, very frail, and against the whiteness of her skin her extremely red lips and straight, sensitively modeled nose were accentuated. She was dressed in a plain but becoming gown, and as she sat opposite us, against the background of a tall, dark walnut chair, she was like a pale flower. There was something in the gaze she sent up from the large gray eyes which touched me strangely.

Jean Govieau spoke.

"Mrs. Faskin, I want you to feel that we come to you as friends. We are going to do everything we can to help you. I am Jean Govieau, a chemist, and I am retained by the prosecuting attorney to make tests in important cases. My friend is Mr. George Andrews, a writer on historical subjects, whose name is perhaps familiar to you. Let me assure you again that you may trust both of us. Now I must ask a question: Do you know where your husband is?"

Mrs. Faskin started violently. Her fingers clutched at a fine lace handkerchief and she pressed it to her bosom.

"My husband—is not—at home." Her words came in convulsive jerks, as though between sobs. "He has—not been home—since last night. I was on the point—of calling—the police."

My friend and I could perceive that she was controlling herself with the utmost difficulty.

"You are greatly disturbed," said Jean Govieau softly; "let me say that your husband is unquestionably safe."

Then with great tenderness and diplomacy, for which I have ever since respected him, my chemist friend related to Mrs. Faskin the facts concerning the letter and the demands for ransom.

Before he had finished the woman was shaking with weeping. We gave her the letter, and she looked at it a moment, but I doubt, with eyes blurred with tears, that she was able to read it.

"You will pardon me, gentlemen." Her words were scarcely audible between sobs. "It is so terrible—so sudden—I can scarcely realize it. Oh, why should such a thing

happen to us? I have some money—not much; this will ruin us."

I was greatly affected by her grief. Presently, however, Govieau succeeded in calming her so that she could listen to us again.

"I presume that you desire to avoid publicity in this matter if possible," Govieau began. "If such is the case it would be unwise to notify the police. Furthermore, the scoundrels who wrote this letter will very likely use every power in their means to learn whether the police are called. I would advise you to secure what rest you can to-night. To-morrow you will hear from me. I hope to help you."

With this we arose. My friend had received Mrs. Faskin's promise to trust him. I knew Govieau's way, though his methods are always a puzzle to me, and despite the fact that I ceaselessly chided him for his amateur exploits I knew that he was capable of amazing results.

He was quiet again on the way back to Ashley Square. Near his lodging I prepared to leave him.

"I will need you to-morrow, Andrews," he said in parting. "This case will surprise you."

CHAPTER TWO

I WILL confess that I was very much on needles all during the next day. I heard nothing from Jean Govieau until after dinner, although my thoughts had dwelt almost constantly on the strange business of the preceding night. It was about 8 p. m. when Govieau rang.

"Come over at once, old fellow," he said; "I will have a part for you to play to-night."

I needed no further bidding and, snatching up my hat, left immediately. I found my friend alone, perched on one of his big leather chairs like a bird on its nest.

"Ha! I am glad you are prompt," he exclaimed as I entered, "but we have some time yet to wait. Mrs. Faskin will be here presently with the fifteen thousand dollars ransom."

I gave a surprised start.

"Are you going to permit her to pay the money?"

"Certainly. It is the only way out."

I was about to remonstrate further when the bell rang.

"This no doubt is Mrs. Faskin," the chemist remarked.

As the caller entered I could see that she was somewhat composed, but around her eyes were the telltale lines of care.

"I have the money, Mr. Govieau," she said briefly. "It is all in one-hundred-dollar bills."

From her bag she extracted a bulky packet and placed it in my friend's hands.

"You will both excuse me for a moment," the latter said as he went toward the door; "I have a little work to do, and there will be nothing else demanding our attention until the appointed hour."

He went into his private chamber and closed the door after him. In a few minutes he returned, carrying in his hand a large envelope.

"The money is in here," he told her. "We will leave it unsealed, for no doubt our mysterious woman will look inside to see whether it is really there."

During the next half-hour Govieau entertained us with narratives about the many curios in his chambers, but at intervals he put some pertinent question to Mrs. Faskin.

Her husband, I gathered, was in the real-estate business on a moderate scale. At the time of their marriage, two years before, she had supplied a small capital. He had been always a most considerate husband, regular and exemplary in habits. She had no notion how he might have fallen into the hands of desperadoes.

Shortly after nine o'clock Govieau suggested that it was time for us to begin.

"Mrs. Faskin, you will take the envelope containing the money and go from here to Channing street, where you will engage a cab and drive directly to the side entrance of the B—— Building," he directed. "When the woman appears give her the envelope."

"And you, friend Andrews, must station yourself at Jefferson and Greene avenues,"

he added. "There you will wait until nine-forty-five. Then proceed at once to the side entrance of the B—— Building, obtain a cab and see Mrs. Faskin to her home. That will be all to-night."

I had too much consideration for my friend's ability to raise any question. At the corner near his apartment we three went on separate ways. What part was Govieau's I did not know.

I stood at my corner eating with impatience while the clock opposite ticked off the interminable minutes. I was two squares from the B—— Building.

At last when the minute had designated the time for action I started to walk briskly to the scene where the transaction was to take place. I saw Mrs. Faskin in the shadowy doorway, her pale face silhouetted against the blackness. As she took my arm she swayed in a half faint.

When I had hailed a cab I endeavored as best I could to reassure her. Soon she was somewhat calmer.

"I am better now," she said, though I could discern she was trembling violently. "The woman—I never saw her before—tall and dark—she took the money—almost as soon as I arrived—I was faint—I am better."

I spoke encouragingly:

"Your husband will be home very soon. Mr. Govieau is to be trusted."

When we reached her house I left her in the care of her maid.

CHAPTER THREE

JEAN GOVIEAU called me on the telephone at ten the next morning and urged me to come to his lodgings at once. I was scarcely able to finish my breakfast, so eager was I to learn the latest developments.

"Mr. Earl Faskin has been safely restored to his wife!" he greeted.

"Well, what of that?" I replied without much enthusiasm. "It cost that poor woman something like fifteen thousand dollars, didn't it?"

He only smiled.

Some minutes later we heard a step on the stairs. "That is no doubt Mr. Earl Faskin; I asked him to call this morning at eleven," my friend explained. "Ha! There's the bell."

Mr. Faskin was a man about thirty-five, of medium build. As he removed his hat I observed that the arches of his forehead ran high, indicating a slight baldness. His light-blue eyes were set in an extremely pale face, to which his colorless lips afforded no contrast. The dark, puffy blotches under his eyes denoted either sleeplessness or suffering. He sat on the edge of a chair and stared at us gloomily.

"Well, Mr. Faskin, let me congratulate you on your escape," Govieau began.

"Thank you. It was a terrible ordeal," the man replied hollowly.

He drew a handkerchief from his coat and wiped his brow.

"Of course." Govieau arose and stood directly in front of our visitor, eyeing him calmly. "And now, Mr. Faskin, that you are safely returned to your wife, upon whom you played such a scoundrelly trick, resulting in the loss of fifteen thousand dollars' worth of her own money in the most palpable swindle that any blockhead ever fell for—I hope, I say, that you have learned a lesson."

Mr. Faskin leaped from his chair as though he had found it suddenly charged with electricity. The pallor of his face increased and his tone was a snarl.

"What are you talking about?"

"There, sit down again; I am not through talking yet," Govieau returned in the same serene but cold accents. "It is only because of your wife, for whom I have great respect and sympathy, that I do not turn this case over to the authorities.

"Don't get excited. I know your scheme from top to bottom, and although it is a shame your wife lost the money, I am really glad that those swindlers turned their trick on you. You found the birds flown this morning when you went to collect your profits, eh?"

While my friend made these astounding

statements the face of Mr. Faskin was a study in changing color.

"You can't prove a thing!" he yelled.

Govieau stood over him menacingly.

"You shall see. I know that these swindlers suggested this kidnapping scheme to you and that you agreed to let them go through with it to get the money from your wife, so you could invest in their bunco game. Don't you realize that theirs is the oldest fraud in the world? I know how you stayed, a voluntary prisoner, in that house in Glendale."

I could see the man wince at Govieau's words.

"You are even worse than those grafters," continued the chemist. "You were seeking ill-gotten gains by a crooked scheme which they proposed, and you agreed to rob your own wife to get the money. Mr. Faskin, it was a cruel business. I am not going to expose you to your wife; I have not the heart to shatter her ideals, false as they are. Now, sir, you may go. I hope that you have learned a lesson."

The man got up and backed away. He tried to convey defiance, failed miserably, sputtered something, and then bolted through the door.

When he had gone Govieau turned his blandest smile in my direction.

"That man is absolutely characterless."

"What has happened?" I asked. "I am dumbfounded; I had no idea——"

My friend laughed.

"You have perhaps had some inkling of it from the conversation. It was indeed a cruel trick. Last night I was on hand to follow the woman with the jade-handled umbrella. She entered a cab about one block from the B—— Building and drove into Glendale. I had a splendid chauffeur and kept her well in sight.

"She stopped before an apartment-house. Farther down the block I got out and crouched near a building to watch. Presently a large man came out, received the envelope through the cab window, and returned to the house. The cab went on. I believe that the woman was a mere tool."

Govieau paused and lit a cigarette. He chuckled over the narrative.

"It was quite simple, Andrews," he resumed. "I went into the apartment-house. The stairway and first corridor were quite dark. I crept along, listening at each door. At last I heard voices.

"'There's the money!' The tone was boastful. 'You can give me a receipt for it and go ahead and make the investment. Now, you don't need to be afraid of me; I won't breathe a word. I told you I was in on this thing. I knew my wife would hand over the money. I'll bet she was scared plumb stiff.'

"Then I heard another voice, very quiet and suave:

"'That is all very well, Mr. Faskin, but you will realize that we have been put to some danger getting this money for you. Of course we are willing to make the investment, but will expect a commission from your profits for our trouble. Is that satisfactory?'

"'Certainly, I'll do what's right,' Faskin returned.

"Then, Andrews, I needed to hear no more. It was quite evident that our friend Faskin had fallen in with swindlers and agreed to be kidnapped so he could obtain that money from his wife—nearly all she has in the world. I understand that he was virtually penniless when they were married. I know that before Faskin came up here this morning he went out to Glendale, expecting to collect his profits from the swindlers. Of course he found them flown."

I was quite amazed.

"You have done some splendid detective work," I said, "but nevertheless this little lesson for Faskin has cost his wife some fifteen thousand dollars.

Govieau chuckled as he ground the fire from his cigarette.

"I know I could have the gang arrested on a charge of swindling, but of course Faskin would not testify. Also the whole story would come out with the accompanying undesirable publicity for that poor woman. Don't you think it was better to spare her?"

"Perhaps," I returned. "But the money——"

Again my acute friend smiled.

"The money, all of it, is in the drawer of that table behind you, and I will see that it is returned to Mrs. Faskin. The money never left this room.

"You know, Andrews, I always had a notion that some day I would find use for those counterfeit one-hundred-dollar bills that the prosecutor gave me as specimens. You recall the case? The notes baffled even the bank experts. Our crooked friends will never be prosecuted for the swindling deal, but they are under arrest at this moment on a charge of possessing counterfeit money."

CONJURERS

"SOME years ago I read of the death of Professor Herrmann, in his native town, Carlsbad, Germany," said the theatrical manager. "He was the original Herrmann, and the greatest prestidigitateur that ever lived. I saw him first in New Orleans in 1860. He was the originator of the fish trick, at that time considered the most wonderful invented. Extending his left arm to the audience, he drew a handkerchief across it with his right, and in his left hand appeared a large globe with goldfish swimming around in it. Again he threw the handkerchief across his arm, drawing it down over the globe, and immediately there were two globes full of fish, one standing on the other. This was his greatest feat."

"Talking of prestidigitateurs," said a traveled citizen, "do you remember Anderson, 'the Wizard of the North,' he called himself? I remember years ago he closed his engagement in London at Covent Garden Theatre, by giving a masquerade ball, and while the masqueraders were in the midst of their revels the theatre took fire and was burned to the ground, the masqueraders escaping through the windows, and barely saving their lives. He was called by many the incarnation of the Evil One from the marvelous tricks he performed.

"One in particular I will mention. He asked if any one in the audience would lend him a Bank of England note, and an old dilapidated five-pound note, backed with nine signatures, was handed to him, the owner having just taken a memorandum of the date and number of the note and the signatures, some of which were well known to the holder of the note. Professor Anderson took the note and held it apparently in the flame of a candle until it was consumed, coolly remarking to the gentleman who handed it to him, 'I am sorry for your note. Where would you like to have your note from—this lemon or this loaf of bread?'

"The lemon was chosen, whereupon the wizard severed the lemon in the centre and drew out a new, crisp Bank of England note of the same denomination, and handed it to the gentleman. Knowing the one he handed to the wizard was old, dirty, and with worn edges, a careful scrutiny was at once made. The date and number was found to correspond, and the indorsements on the back were intact!

"The wizard inquired: 'Is that the note you gave me, sir?' and on receiving the reply, 'It appears to be, but the one I gave you was an old note, and this is a new one,' Anderson coolly replied, 'It has gone through a cleaning process.' Not feeling satisfied, the owner of the note the next day showed it to the person he received it from, and whose signature it bore, and said: 'Is that your signature?'

" 'Yes,' he said, 'but that is not the note I gave you; I gave you an old one.'

"On the circumstances being explained, the two went to the Bank of England and presented it for payment. The paying teller examined it carefully and paid it, and was then asked, 'Is that not a good one?'

"He again examined it critically, and said, 'Yes, but it is remarkably clean and new for a note bearing that date.' "

Anderson did many tricks that were never explained by him.

THE MYSTERY OF THE CALVIN WILL

—by Beulah Poynter—

PART TWO

CHAPTER SEVEN

SYLVIA choked, pushed away something which smelled pungent and took her breath; then struggling to a sitting posture, she stared in terrified bewilderment about her. She was in a small dimly lighted room on a cot covered with the blankets and satin coverlets from her own bed; a three-legged chair and a battered table were the only other furnishings in the sordid, dingy room. A window with rags stuck in a broken pane and pieces of paper pasted over the crease-streaked glass was within her line of vision. A fluttering candle flickered fitfully on the chair beside the cot.

A man was leaning over her, a large, swarthy man, not a great deal unlike in appearance her Cousin Truman Calvin. In his gloved hand he held a bottle of aromatic ammonia, with which he had been trying to revive her. Near him stood two other men clad like himself in heavy winter coats and fur caps. One she recognized as a new chauffeur Truman had engaged since arriving at the house—engaged much against her wishes. The room was icy cold.

"She's coming to," muttered the man with the ammonia bottle.

"It's a good job she is," from the smaller of the other two; "if she'd 'a' died, or anything happened to her, I'd not like to have to face T. Calvin afterwards."

"Where am I?" cried Sylvia through chattering teeth, drawing the blanket tightly about her thinly clad shoulders.

The first man laughed. "You're not a hundred miles from New York City," he chuckled.

"But why am I here? Who are you? What do you want?" Her voice rose into a shriek.

The big man glanced apprehensively toward the broken window. "You'll have to ask your cousin those questions when he arrives," he returned quietly. "Our job was to fetch you here and to keep you quiet."

"Truman! Truman had you do this? Why? Where is he?" She half started to her feet, then, remembering her attire, sank back shivering among the blankets.

"He'll be here by morning," answered the dark man, "if not before."

He took the candle from the chair and placed it carefully on the battered table and seated himself on the chair. From his

pocket he drew out a deck of cards and a vile-smelling pipe, which he lighted.

"Want to play a game of rummy?" he asked the other two, "or three-handed bridge? It'll help pass the time."

The smaller man grunted assent, while the other shrugged his shoulders. "There ain't but one chair," he growled, "and I've no fancy playing cards on my feet."

The big man spread the playing-cards on the table and began a game of solitaire, while the smaller man looked interestedly over his shoulder, and his other companion, the chauffeur, stumped about the room.

Sylvia began to sob pitifully, softly. She felt utterly helpless. Without clothing, friends, and a prisoner, she knew there was no use to attempt an escape, and she was certain that with the arrival of her cousin fresh indignities and humiliations were in store for her.

Suddenly, lying there face downward, she heard a peculiar sound; it seemed to come from under the hut itself, as though from the very earth—a queer buzzing, rumbling noise, as some piece of machinery. She stiffened, ceased her sobs and listened.

The big man sprang to his feet with an oath. "Damn him!" he snarled; "hasn't he any gumption? Tell him to shut that thing off at once, Bevins! He must be crazy!"

The smaller man whom he addressed as Bevins lifted a trapdoor almost at Sylvia's feet and, descending a small, almost perpendicular, flight of stairs, vanished from sight, carefully closing the door after him.

The strange noise instantly ceased.

A moment later Bevins reappeared. He was followed by another man, a slim, pallid, rather young person, with thin straw-colored hair and glazed pale gray eyes. His clothes hung about his gaunt shoulders, and he stopped painfully, as though it were an effort for him to stand. He appeared to be in awe of the big man.

"Well, Dopey, what's the idea?" The man at the table turned and faced the shivering wretch.

"Well"—Dopey shifted from one foot to the other—"we're behind, Stevens, and—and how'd I know the girl was here yet?"

"Can't you hear? You're not deaf!"

"I—I guess I wasn't listenin'," was the faltering reply, "er mebbe I was asleep."

"Some day you won't be listenin', and when you do hear again you'll be up the river!" snapped Stevens. "Now keep that thing quiet and lay low!"

"Yes, sir." The man backed away and disappeared beneath the trapdoor. As it was lifted Sylvia felt a rush of warm air, and her curiosity as to what was below almost overcame her terror and the agony of her own position.

Possibly another hour later she heard the sound of an automobile in the road beyond, and a few moments after the door opened and Truman Calvin entered the shack.

"Truman!" she cried, indignation banishing her fear, "how dare you do this to me? What is it you want?"

He crossed slowly toward her, and the look on his sullen dark face made her cringe back against the dusty walls and shudder.

"I want my father's will, and I'm going to have it," he said coldly, weighing each word.

"I haven't got it!" she cried; "you know I haven't got it!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

KINSEY shook the sleeping woman, but her gray head wagged lifelessly from side to side and her eyes did not open.

"Mrs. Stanton!" he called. "Mrs. Stanton!"

Loath to leave her like this, yet feeling moments were precious where Sylvia was concerned, he was uncertain what to do. A pitcher half full of water stood on the dresser, and seeing it he poured a portion of its contents in her face. She stirred uneasily.

Then seeing a pushbell on the wall, he pressed it, and as he awaited a servant's entrance he began chafing the drugged woman's hands and endeavoring to awaken her.

No one came in reply to his summons,

but after a little Mrs. Stanton opened her eyes and stared unknowingly at him.

"What happened to you, Mrs. Stanton, Are you ill? Do you often sleep like this?"

She shook her head, as yet unable to speak.

"Don't you know something has happened to Miss Sylvia? Didn't you hear her scream? They've abducted her."

That roused the woman's bewildered mentality. "Miss Sylvia scream? That was why he did it!"

"Did what?"

"Made me drink the wine!"

"Who did?"

"Mr. Truman; then I went to sleep—like this! Oh, my head aches so terribly!" She fell back among the pillows again and her heavy eyelids closed.

"Truman! Blast him!" Without another look at the again unconscious woman Kinsey darted into the hallway.

It was as silent as a house of death. Save for the light from his own open door above and that from the room he had just left the place was in darkness. He called "Truman! Truman!" several times, but received no answer.

Down the circular flight of stairs to the rooms below he darted, still calling. No reply! He flung open doors right and left, but the house was empty. He found a telephone, and tried ineffectually for several minutes to get McManus on the wire, but after receiving no answer gave it up in despair.

He was baffled! He had no idea which way to turn, how to start his search for the stolen girl. The woman upstairs could tell him nothing, and long ago the automobile that had carried Sylvia away had vanished in the night. There was nothing to do but wait until morning and, getting assistance from McManus, comb the city for her.

Truman Calvin was gone, and Kinsey was certain he had gone to her.

Kinsey slowly started back toward the steps; then, impelled by something he could not define, he stepped into a room just behind the drawing-room, which previously Mrs. Stanton had informed him belonged to her dead master. It had been Cyrus Calvin's study or den, and though the ancient furniture was now covered with denim and the large mahogany desk was closed, the spirit of the old man still seemed to prevail.

Kinsey found a gasjet and lighted it; then choosing a comfortable-looking chair, removed its cover and seated himself.

From where he sat he could survey every angle of the room, the high-paneled walls, the built-in bookcases, the desk and safe.

"They've all been searched," he said dryly, "but I suppose another look wouldn't hurt."

For the next hour or more he searched every nook and cranny of the room, carefully fingering the panels of walls and doors, hoping to press secret buttons. He opened desk and safe drawers, he pulled up rugs and spied behind curtains, but there was no trace of the missing will, nor were there any locked passages or drawers. Then he entered the adjourning chamber, the room in which the old man had passed away.

It was a sombre place, with a heavy black canopied four-poster bed; the linen had been removed, and only a thick quilted mattress covered the springs. An ancient tall-boy stood between two wooden-shuttered windows. A night table with a spoon and glass resting upon it, standing near the couch, made Kinsey shiver as though its late occupant still reposed upon the bed and waited for relief from pain that the medicine the glass had once contained would give him.

There were two closets off the room. Hanging in them were some clothing of the deceased: a rusty, almost green dress suit, a dinner jacket of later model, a Prince Albert, several dressing gowns and business suits.

Kinsey searched every pocket, turning them inside-out, feeling seams and creases. He went through the drawers of the tall-boy, the shelves of the closet, all unsuccessfully. He examined the mattress, the canopy, again the rugs, then gave it up in despair.

Morning was breaking, cold, bleak and gray. He went out into the hallway, hoping for some sign of life in the dismal house

and with it a bracing cup of coffee. But still it was silent.

Then, seeing his outer wraps on a clothes-rack in the hall, he donned them, and walking to a corner managed to secure a cab and sped downtown.

CHAPTER NINE

IN the shack, alone with her cousin, Sylvia faced him defiantly. It was ten o'clock, and since daybreak they had argued, he for immediate marriage, she swearing she would rather die than do as he desired.

"I loathe you," she said with infinite scorn on her pale young face; "if the will is never found I'd a thousand times prefer that uncle's money go to charity and I work all my life than that I share the fortune with you as your wife!"

"You may," he drawled, "but I am not going to be cheated out of my birthright. You've just twelve hours to consider, my sweet cousin; then if you will not marry me of your own accord I'll find ways to compel you to do so."

"That you can't do!" she retorted. "This is a free country, and a girl cannot be forced into marriage against her will! Don't forget there has to be a license and a——"

"I've provided for that. Our marriage license was secured three days ago. I anticipated just such a time as this."

"License! How—could you get one without me?" she stammered.

"I had an accommodating friend impersonate you. I'm not without some ingenuity. Please give me credit."

"No minister would marry us!"

"I have one who will, and at exactly six o'clock to-night he will be here. He owes me a debt that he is compelled to repay, and I think is more than glad to do it this way."

The girl sighed and closed her eyes wearily.

"Dopey will bring you some food," said her cousin after a moment's silence, "but don't attempt to bribe him to get you away, for you'll find your efforts futile. I'm going home now; I've had a bad night and need some rest. Au revoir, fair cousin, until I can call you wife!"

"You go back to the house and stay there," said McManus after listening to Kinsey's amazing recital. "If the will has not been discovered and Miss Dalton's abduction proves that it hasn't, this Truman Calvin will not stay away, and is bound to turn up there before the day is over."

"But don't you see?" interrupted Kinsey excitedly, "he has had her kidnapped, and in that case it is more necessary to be hunting for the girl than it is for the will."

"We'll do both. I'll send both Carter and Thorne out as trailers and keep a man posted near University street in case you need him. This Calvin seems to be a bad bird, and if cornered will probably be desperate. After all, Kinsey, we were engaged to find the will, not a girl; don't forget that."

"But hang it, man. I love her!"

"Oh, so that's how the land lies, is it? Well, put your mind at ease; if the girl can be found she will be. Beat it uptown."

He called to a stalwart, red-haired young man who had been looking out of the window at the surging Broadway traffic below, and gave him instructions as to the address on University street and where to be in case Kinsey should need him.

"Say, chief," he said after listening gravely, "what d'ye know about these counterfeit tens they're surfeiting old New York with. It's a clever guy that's making them, I'll tell the world. I sure would like to lay my hands on him!"

"So would Kinsey. The reward is big enough for his capture to make a man think of marriage even with a girl like Sylvia Dalton."

CHAPTER TEN

WHEN Kinsey reached the front door of the Calvin home he rang the bell, and after receiving no answer turned

the knob; it swung open under his hand, and he stepped into the dim, shadowy corridor and saw coming toward him Mrs. Stanton. Her footsteps were faltering, as though walking were a painful task, and she was very pale. There were great shadows under her eyes, and her face showed the ordeal through which she had passed.

"Mr. Kinsey!" she quavered. "Miss Sylvia——"

"Has she returned?" he exclaimed, catching her outstretched hand.

"No, sir! And there's been no word from her! I'm afraid something terrible has happened to her, and Mr. Truman is gone, too. What is it? What happened?"

"Come into the drawing-room," he said quickly. He drew her through the half-open doorway and briefly explained what had occurred the night before and how he had found her in bed in a drugged slumber.

"You said then," he added, "that Truman Calvin induced you to drink wine you didn't want, and that afterward you fell asleep."

"Yes, sir, he did. I ain't a prohibitionist, Mr. Kinsey, but I've no love for spirituous liquors, and don't ever drink anything but a drop or so of beer once in a while. But last night after Mr. Truman came home I was standing in the dining-room and saw him go past looking just like a thunder-cloud! I never saw a face so wicked! And I thought of Miss Sylvia, and the will, and what it would mean to her if it wasn't ever found and she had to marry him, and thinking about it all made me want to find the missing will. I just couldn't go to sleep for thinking about it, even after I'd gone upstairs and was in my bed, so at last I got up and put a wrapper on and came downstairs. I knew everybody had searched everywhere for it, but I wanted to try once more, just prayin' that I'd be the one to find it. I went right into Mr. Cyrus Calvin's bedroom, and just as I'd turned on the light Mr. Truman came into the room. 'What are you doin' here?' he says to me, and I fairly shivered in my shoes. I guess I got kinda white-lookin', for he'd frightened me. 'Lookin' for the will, are you?' he snarled; 'well, it's not here and never has been! There's no such will ever been made!'"

"'Oh, yes, there has!' I cried; 'I witnessed it!' Then because I was so startled, and it was cold, so late at night, I began to cry. He looked annoyed; then a funny expression crept over his face. He threw his arms around me and pulled me out into the hall toward the dining-room. 'You're shiverin', Stanton,' he says; 'you ought to be in bed. Here, take a drink of this wine; it'll warm you up and make you sleep better.'"

"'No,' says I, 'I don't drink'; but he wouldn't listen to me, and just as though he had poured it on purpose for me he picks up a glass already filled with wine off the table and poured it down my throat. I stumbled up to bed, and I didn't know anything more till you wakened me, sir."

"Hem!" said Kinsey. "Evidently he had it prepared for you. And where are the other servants?"

"That I don't know, sir; there ain't so many of us for a house as big as this, but now there don't seem to be a soul here but myself—begging pardon, sir; I mean there wasn't until you came. Yesterday at luncheon Mr. Truman got angry at Spalding, the butler, about something and gave him his immediate notice, right over Miss Sylvia's head, so he left, but I can't understand Williams, the chauffeur, or Libby, the cook! I'm afraid something awful has happened, Mr. Kinsey! Where is Miss Sylvia?"

"God knows, I wish I knew!" exclaimed Kinsey bitterly.

"Hadn't we ought to call in the police, sir?"

"You, perhaps, don't know it, Mrs. Stanton, but I am a private detective."

"You! Mr. Kinsey!" the housekeeper gasped, and a tinge of color stained her pale cheeks. "Why, I thought as you were Miss Sylvia's lover!"

"I do love Miss Sylvia," he answered grimly, "and if any harm has come to her Truman Calvin shall pay dearly for it. Rest assured, Mrs. Stanton, that there are men already out searching for her."

"Oh, sir, I'm glad." The woman's eyes

filled with tears; she rose painfully to her feet. "There's a lot to be done around the house, sir, if you'll excuse me?"

"Surely, Mrs. Stanton, and while we're alone I'm going to get busy myself. If Truman Calvin comes in let me know, but don't tell him I'm here. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

After the woman left him Kinsey went once more into the late Cyrus Calvin's sleeping quarters. Eaten up with impatience, feeling like a caged animal, he paced nervously back and forth on the heavy sound-deadening rug. Once he crossed to one of the windows and, flinging open the wooden shutters, stared out at the snow-covered street beyond. Standing at the corner, with hands thrust in his pockets, chin buried in the collar of his coat, was a brawny red-haired youth, whom Kinsey recognized.

"Mallory on the job," muttered Kinsey. "McManus must anticipate real trouble."

He closed the shutters again, fingering the automatic he held in his pocket. As he reached the centre of the room he saw he was not alone.

Standing sinister, silent, malignant was the huge figure of Truman Calvin in the doorway. His upper lip was drawn back from his tobacco-stained teeth in a smile of such ominous intent that for the moment Kinsey could not speak; then all he said was: "Well!"

"What are you doing here?" Truman advanced toward him, the smile still curling his lips.

"Where is Miss Dalton?" snapped the detective.

"Perhaps you'll tell me that."

"Don't fence. You've a desperate man to deal with, Calvin; not just a lover, but an officer of the law."

"You've told me nothing I didn't know already. I don't know where she is; perhaps in her room, perhaps shopping, or perhaps——"

"Liar! You or your confederates abducted her last night! You locked me in my room! You drugged the housekeeper!"

"Why, hang you!" Calvin's huge fist shot out, and but for Kinsey's agile dodging of the blow he would have been struck full in the face.

"So that's it, is it?" cried the latter. He whipped out his revolver and leveled it on his adversary. "You tell me where Sylvia Dalton is or I'll blow your head off."

Calvin grinned, but he never flinched; shrugging his great shoulders, he quietly drew a cigarette from his pocket and lighted it. His gaze never shifted from the detective's, and Kinsey could not help but admire his courage, even though he were blazing with fury.

"That's not the tone to take with me," Truman drawled. "I'm not afraid of your pretty toy, and you haven't got a thing on me. Maybe I did have my cousin abducted, but you can't prove it, d'ye hear; you can't prove it! And before you or any one else sees her again she'll be my wife, and then you can search for the will and be hanged!"

He made a sudden lurch toward the detective, landing full in the pit of his stomach. The blow was a sickening one and Kinsey reeled dizzily; inadvertently his finger pressed the trigger, and the pistol pointing directly at the footboard of the old mahogany bed, the bullet, whizzing through the air, blew the knob off one of the slender posts.

Kinsey gave a groan, staggered backwards, stumbled against the tall-boy, sending it crashing to the floor, then he crumpled up beside it, his head falling forward upon his chest, his eyes closed.

Calvin gave one glance at him and bolted from the room, slamming the door behind him and locking it.

The instant he was gone Kinsey sprang to his feet and dashed to the window, flinging it open. He blew a long blast on his police whistle.

The red-haired sentinel at the corner quickly raised his head and looked toward the window.

Kinsey cupped his mouth with his hands and shouted: "Follow the man who leaves here! Wing him if you can!"

Then he turned toward the bed, laughing uproariously. "A good shot, old boy!" he chuckled.

Sticking in the hollow where the knob of

the bedpost had been screwed was a slip of paper, and Kinsey suspected instinctively it was the missing will!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SYLVIA realized that it was mid-afternoon and that for possibly two hours she had been asleep. Utterly weary from sobbing, terror and exposure, outraged Nature had asserted herself, and after Truman Calvin had left her alone the girl had at last fallen into a deep slumber. Raising cautiously, she drew the blankets about her, stepped onto the cold dusty boards of the floor and crept to the window. She easily dislodged the dirty rags thrust in the broken pane and saw that the window was almost on a lever with the ground outside; but disappointment awaited her, for heavy iron bars enclosed the windows, and these she could not move.

The door, though battered and old, was of thick oak and sturdy. The underbrush and clumps of snow-laden trees she had seen when looking out of the window informed her only too clearly that she was a long way from other habitation and that all cries for help would be futile.

At last she turned to the trapdoor, and after finding the brass ring with which it was lifted managed to raise it a trifle. "Dopey!" she called to the man below. "Dopey!"

"Ye—eh?" A moment later the glassy-eyed stare of the drug fiend greeted her. He climbed slowly from the cavern, and closing the door behind him faced her. "What d'ye want?" he said furtively.

"I want to leave here and at once," she demanded.

One glance at his shrunken body, his pallid, quivering face, and she had felt she was his equal in strength. All she needed was the opportunity to overpower him.

"You'll have to tell that to the boss," he answered, his shifting eyes leering as they rested on her fresh golden beauty; "his orders goes and I ain't the one to go agin 'em."

"You open that door!" commanded Sylvia. "Open it this instant!"

Dopey continued to smile. Color flooded Sylvia's face, her little hands clenched and the muscles in her slim shoulders hardened. She gave him stare for stare, and the man drew back a step.

"If you don't release me, when help comes I'll see that you are sent to prison," she said slowly, feeling his puny spirit weakening.

"Aw, lady, have a heart; I gotta do what the boss says or he'll kill me. I'd like to oblige yuh; honest I would, but I can't let yuh go, honest I can't." He turned toward the trapdoor.

"Stay where you are," cried Sylvia, "and give me the key to the door."

"I can't," he sniffled; "I won't."

Sylvia's hand rested on the back of the three-legged chair. As he stooped to lift the trapdoor she raised the chair over her head and flung it at him with all the strength she possessed. It landed on the back of his neck, and he crumpled over on his face with one groan and then lay deathly still.

For a moment the girl thought she had killed him. She gave a hysterical sob, and overcoming her disgust in touching him she pulled him about until she could feel his heart. It was beating and his breath came regularly. She fumbled through all his pockets, still sobbing, but she found no key.

She began to moan then, and hardly daring to hope she raised the trapdoor and fearfully dismounted the perpendicular flight of stairs, her bare feet cringing on the cold stone steps. A flickering light far back in the semi-darkness guided her progress. She tripped over a mass of tin cans and empty beer bottles, bundles of rags and heaps of old papers; then finding a door through which the light filtered, she stepped inside a warm, unusually equipped room.

There were two long tables on either side and a printing press, a die, some brass plates and piles and piles of green-backed bills. Ten-dollar bills! In astonishment the girl swayed, then comprehension of what she saw dawned upon her

"Counterfeits!" she gasped. "A counterfeiter's plant; then Truman is——"

She began searching feverishly among the piles of paper, the press and brass stamps for the key to the shack door. At last she found a piece of metal which she prayed was the thing she was looking for, and stumbled sobbing, half blinded with her terror, toward the stairs again. As she reached the trap a door slamming above, the crunch of footsteps on the rotting boards, arrested her.

Her cousin's voice raised in an oath informed her she had found her rescue too late. The next instant he lifted the trap-door and pulled her shuddering body into the room above.

"Thought you could escape me!" he snarled. "Well, you can't, and I've decided we're to be married now, and not waste any more time."

With him were the two men she had seen in the early morning and another looking like a minister.

CHAPTER TWELVE

KINSEY drew the piece of paper from the hollow of the bedpost, gave it a hasty glance, and ascertained that it was unquestionably Cyrus Calvin's last will and testament. Then, dashing to the window, he flung it open and dropped a good six feet to the ground. He fell on his hands and knees, but the thick mantle of snow saved him from any bad results, and rising hastily he shook himself and tore out of the garden, around the corner and into the house again. There he seized a telephone resting on a taboret in the hallway. Mrs. Stanton, who had heard the pistol shot and had gone to the bedroom door, whirled quickly when she saw him and started to make excited inquiries, but he impatiently waved to her to be silent and jangled the receiver in an effort to get McManus on the phone.

"I've found the will!" he shouted when he succeeded at last in getting his partner. "Calvin tried to do me, and I let him think he had. He's bolted, but Mallory is after him. Send some one else to watch this house and get the will, which I'm going to leave here with the housekeeper. I'm going after Mallory."

"The will!" cried Mrs. Stanton. "You've found the will, sir? Oh, thank God!"

"Here, keep it," he said, pushing it into her trembling hands, "and hide it, and on your life don't give it to any one but a man with a badge on who'll come here asking for it."

"Yes, sir! Yes, sir!" she quavered. "Yes, sir! I'll take care of it! Oh, Miss Sylvia is saved, sir! Thank God!"

There was a garage just across the street from the Calvin home, and in front of it stood an unoccupied black-and-white taxi. Its driver, a red-faced, burly Irishman, was in the act of telling the mechanic inside the building about how the bird who had just dashed out of the house opposite had fleeced him with a counterfeit ten-dollar bill and how he'd got his number, when Kinsey, running up to him, asked him if he had a fare.

"No!"

"All right; you have one now. Say, did you see a man just come out of that house, a huge dark man with a black mustache?"

"Did I? I'll tell me mother's sister I did, and he's the one I'm after."

"Did you see which way he went?"

"He jumped into a car he musta had waitin', and there was a preacher-like-lookin' chap wid him. I took the number av the car, and I'd know it again anywhere. It was gray with red wheels and the number was——"

"Which way did he go?"

"Toward Westchester."

"All right; go that way, and hurry." Kinsey jumped into the seat beside him. "It's fifty dollars for you if we catch him."

"Cop?" queried the man, starting his engine.

"Yes," non-committally.

"There's another guy trailin' him," ventured the driver; "that's why I didn't foller him myself. This other bird musta been watchin' the house, for when the black guy

drove up in the machine he come a lot closer, and when he comes outa the house and got in the car he just waited a minute to see if he was lookin' back, and hops onto a motorcycle he'd had hid around a fence and tore up the road after him."

"I know—I know," interrupted Kinsey impatiently; "step on your gas!"

"You won't get me into trouble?"

"No, give her first speed. What have you got against Calvin?" he added, raising his voice above the roar of the engine as whirling on two wheels they turned off the Concourse and into the Fordham road.

"Got agin him! Say, he done me for five dollars, he did! He passed a counterfeit ten on me, and I give him back five good bucks in change!"

"Counterfeit!" ejaculated Kinsey. "I wonder! Maybe two birds with one shot! Gad! That would be lucky."

Far ahead, a mere speck on the white stretch of road, Kinsey saw the red outline of Mallory's motorcycle. In his desire for speed he pressed with his foot an imaginary accelerator and lurched his body forward. Neither spoke as mile after mile they tore along, dodging perilously townward-going vehicles, passing upward cars, unheeding stop signals and threats from policemen at crossroads. Telegraph and telephone posts whirled as they passed them, house and trees seemed but blots on the horizon. Now they sighted a red motorcycle and just ahead of it a gray touring car; now they lost them in a clump of trees.

Then they came to what seemed the end of the road, and still following the trail of the gray car turned into an almost untrammeled forest.

Abruptly the taxi came to a stop, for at the bend of the lane stood Mallory beside his red motorcycle.

He held up his hand in recognition of Kinsey, who quickly alighted.

"Well!" gasped the latter.

"There's a shack in there!" whispered Mallory hoarsely, "and our man just went inside with another guy!"

"We'll walk the rest of the way," said Kinsey; "there may be a back exit, and if they hear our car they may beat it again."

"Here, you," he added to the taxi driver, "you look hefty, and we may need help; come along with us."

Slowly, cautiously, carefully avoiding fallen logs and sticks of wood lest the crunching might, by the sound of their footsteps, give away their presence, the three men stole up onto the entrance of the shack.

As Kinsey kicked open the door to the shack an amazing sight greeted his eyes.

Sylvia, half fainting, supported by the arms of her cousin, was facing them, while two other men, one with a revolver in his hand, stood at one side.

"Hands up!" Kinsey said softly; Mallory and Grogan followed him inside.

"Norman!" cried Sylvia.

"Disarm them!" commanded the detective.

"They're counterfeiters!" cried the girl a moment later when, ranged against the wall under the steady glint of two revolvers, the men were disarmed.

Grogan brought some ropes from his car and they were all trussed up.

After binding them Kinsey went below. There, among the debris, the printing press, the plates and counterfeit money, he found the trembling fear-stricken wretch Dopey, whom he yanked upstairs and threw amongst the others.

"Some people have all the luck," said Mallory later when he and Kinsey were with McManus in the Broadway office; "there's that Dalton girl rolling in wealth. But she has to be the one to locate that counterfeit gang and get the reward from the Government. And her supposed cousin was found to be a faker, who learned all the details of the family from the real cousin before he died."

"I don't know about all the luck," said McManus slowly, giving a sly wink toward Kinsey. "How about it, Kinsey? I suppose when you're married to the heiress you'll quit me cold, eh?"

"Ah, don't kid me," laughed the other self-consciously, but his grin broadened and his face became flushed.

(*The end*)

The Claxton Diamonds

By V. E. NELSON

SERGEANT BRIXTON glanced impatiently at his watch. It lacked a few moments of midnight. His singularly pallid face had gone a shade paler. He turned abruptly to the butler.

"I'm expecting a gentleman in the next few minutes. When he arrives show him in at once."

"Yes, sir," and the servant disappeared.

The sergeant re-entered the library. Claxton's body still lay where the bullet of the unknown assassin had cut short his brilliant career. An ugly bullet wound in the right temple indicated the manner of his death. Between his teeth was gripped one of his favorite cigars. The empty wall safe, the door of which stood ajar, bore silent witness to the probable motive for the crime. But what puzzled Brixton was the fact that on the desk in the centre of the room reposed a jewel case, and beside it, as if spread out for examination, lay a necklace of pearls and diamonds, and a diamond and ruby bracelet. If the motive was robbery, why had these been left behind?

From the incoherent answers given by Mrs. Claxton, who at that moment lay on a couch in the adjoining room, half stunned by the horror of the affair, Brixton had learned but little.

She had, she said, retired from the dinner-table where she left her husband, and had repaired to her room on the second floor to dress for a reception at the British embassy. Impatient at the delay of her maid, whom she had despatched to the library for her jewels, she had stepped to the head of the stairs to call her when the house was thrown into darkness and she heard the muffled report of a pistol. Presently the lights went on and she hastened down the stairs and through the dining-room to the library, where she discovered the lifeless body of her husband. A man was leaving through the opposite doorway. The maid had disappeared. Overcome with grief and terror, she had with difficulty been able to call police headquarters and notify them of the tragedy.

The butler told a different story. According to his version of the affair, he had been standing beneath the porte-cochere, when suddenly a woman's form, concealed by a long cloak, rushed past him and vanished in the darkness. Not knowing what to make of it, he had rushed into the house and back into the library. There, he stated, he had found the body of his master lying cold in death, and, standing in the doorway leading to the dining-room, he swore that he had seen Mrs. Claxton, her eyes dilated in horror, a smoking pistol held in her hand.

Was the maid the mysterious woman who the butler claimed had passed him under the porte-cochere? Why had the maid disappeared, and what connection did the jewels have with the murder? What had become of the revolver that the butler claimed was held by Mrs. Claxton? These were the questions that agitated the police sergeant as he paced back and forth in the early morning hours. He stooped again over the prostrate body of the dead financier, but straightened up suddenly as he heard his name spoken.

"What now, Brixton?"

He looked up as Francis Jordan stepped into the room. The latter was a man of perhaps forty-five or fifty, smooth-shaven, somewhat over six feet in height and spare of figure, with the slight stoop of the student. A pair of thick-lensed spectacles enhanced the piercing gaze of his deep-set

gray eyes, which swept the room and finally rested on the lifeless form of the broker.

Quickly Brixton acquainted the famous criminologist with what facts he had uncovered.

"You are right, Brixton," Jordan admitted. "On the face of it, the motive for the crime was robbery, but at the same time—how's this, Brixton?" he continued as he carefully removed with his pocket-knife a leaden bullet from the framework of the door opening upon the hall. "A close shave, eh?" as he held the bullet to the light and whipped out his lens, disclosing several tiny hairs, which still adhered to the metal. He dropped the bullet somewhat carelessly into his vest pocket. His glance traveled quickly to the corpse and then to the desk.

"What do you suppose is the value of the gems, any idea, Brixton?"

"He had a magnificent collection," the sergeant replied. "Claxton himself told me that these pieces alone are worth two hundred thousand. He had been a collector of rare gems for years. It seems that these particular jewels at one time belonged to an East Indian prince, from whose palace they mysteriously disappeared."

"That," interrupted Jordan, "may have no especial significance, and yet——" As he spoke he moved over to the desk and sank down into the large arm-chair before it and closed his eyes. For several seconds he sat buried in thought. Suddenly he jumped to his feet, and as he did so the waste-paper basket rolled over on its side, scattering its contents about on the floor. Jordan dropped to his knees and collected the miscellaneous assortment of papers and placed them on the desk. One after another he examined them with minute care. Finally the shadow of a smile flickered over his face for a moment as he smoothed out a crumpled sheet of paper.

"Who's Kenneth?" he snapped out.

"Kenneth is his son, a rather wild young fellow," Brixton answered. "He is in New York at present with a large banking firm."

"Perhaps he was in New York until yesterday, but yesterday morning he was here," and Jordan tossed over the crumpled sheet of paper. The writing was somewhat blurred, evidently the work of a nervous hand. It was on the stationery of a leading Washington hotel, and was dated the previous day. Brixton scanned it with astonishment.

"For God's sake, and to save me from disgrace, have funds ready for me to-day," he read. As if the note was of no particular importance, Jordan turned again to the desk and, producing a powerful lens, picked up the jewelry and examined each piece closely. Then, opening one of the drawers, he withdrew a large check-book and examined the stubs attentively. Apparently satisfied, he replaced the book and closed the drawer. Then he recrossed the room and bent over the corpse for a moment.

"The bullet which killed Mr. Claxton was fired by some one standing in approximately the very position in which the butler claims to have surprised Mrs. Claxton," he commented. "The position of the body would indicate as much. The bullet which I have just extracted from the door-jamb is of smaller bore than that which ended the broker's life. It is, as you will note, of .22 calibre, while the gun used by the assassin was probably of .38 calibre. You perhaps noticed that the bullet entered at the right temple and emerged on the left side of the head behind and somewhat above the ear. This bullet is now no doubt embedded somewhere in yonder wall, and we must locate it at once."

They both stepped to the opposite side of the room. After a few moments' search Brixton gave a subdued exclamation of triumph.

"Here it is," he announced.

It was, as Jordan had said, of .38 calibre.

Hardly had the words left his mouth when there burst through the doorway a young man of about thirty, with haggard face and disheveled hair. As his wild eyes traveled about the room and finally rested on the corpse, they seemed to distend with horror, and a violent trembling seized his body.

"For God's sake, dead!" he cried. "Jonathan murdered! Oh, my poor sister! Brixton, where is she?"

The sergeant stepped forward and placed a hand on the young man's shoulder.

"Brace up, Lonsdale. Try to control yourself. Your sister is on the verge of collapse. You must think of her and forget your own feelings. Come, she is in yonder room," and he led the trembling young man away.

When he returned Jordan had ceased his nervous pacing to and fro.

"I would like to look about a bit, Brixton," he said abruptly. "You had better remain here. I will return in a few moments. Let no one disturb the body."

Then he stepped into the dark hallway, and with the aid of his pocket flashlight made his way to the rear entrance and up the winding enclosed stairway at the right. On the landing above he quietly opened the door, and proceeding on tiptoe down the corridor, which was dimly lighted by a single electric bulb, arrived at the head of a wide stairway. To the left stood an open door. "Mrs. Claxton's room," he concluded as he stepped inside and softly closed the door. His keen eyes took in the whole room at a glance as he moved quickly to the head of the bed. In the wall to the right was a small safe, which stood open. He inserted his hand; it was empty. He then made his way to a writing-desk near the window and rummaged among the papers which were jammed into the pigeonholes, scrutinizing them closely. At last he gave a sigh of satisfaction as he slipped several letters into his pocket. Silently he made his way to the back stairs and descended to the lower floor.

Scarcely had he set foot on the bottom step when a faint moan arrested his progress. A door within a few feet of him yielded easily to his touch. From it a narrow stairway led into the darkness below. He stopped again to listen. This time the moan was more distinct. Throwing the rays of his lamp into the gloom, he cautiously descended the steps. As he neared the basement floor the groans became more audible. He flashed his lamp over the interior, disclosing huge packing cases piled high along the wall, evidently a storage-room. He hastened toward a closed door at the far end and slipped the bolt back. On the floor, securely bound, lay a girl. When he had removed the cords from her wrists and ankles he found her so weakened that she was in no condition to give a detailed account of what had happened. A few minutes later Brixton sprang to his feet as Jordan stepped into the library with the girl in his arms. The incredulity of his expression was almost ludicrous, but Jordan seemed scarcely to give him a thought.

"Now, miss, tell us exactly what has happened," he said when he had deposited the girl in an armchair and pressed a glass of water to her lips.

Haltingly, in broken, hysterical sentences, she recounted having started down to the library to get Mrs. Claxton's jewels, reaching the foot of the stairs and stepping into the hallway leading to the library. No one except the servants used this hallway, she explained. Contrary to custom, it was in darkness. She was fumbling around for the electric switch when she collided with a soft body. She attempted to scream, but a heavy hand was clasped over her mouth. When she bit into it furiously a cloth was placed over her face and a sickening odor assailed her nostrils. She knew no more until she regained consciousness in the basement room.

As she finished speaking her head dropped to her breast, and her regular breathing soon indicated that she had fallen asleep. Jordan exchanged a few whispered words with Brixton and left the house just as the first faint traces of dawn were appearing in the sky.

He made his way swiftly to Fourteenth street and entered a telephone booth in an all-night drugstore. The mention of his name brought him a quick connection with New York police headquarters, the chief answering the phone.

"Hello, Jordan!" he cried, and then his voice ran on in a low monotone: "Claxton murder reported an hour ago. Already deluged with inquiries. Kenneth Claxton has just been arrested on Brixton's orders. He beat you to it. Expect——" The crisp "good-by" over the phone cut short the monologue.

So Brixton had taken things into his own hands. Well, it was Brixton's case. For a moment Jordan's lips twisted into a bitter smile; then the shrill cry of "Extra!" broke in upon his thoughts, and he hurried from the drugstore. A newsboy thrust a paper into his hand. Across the front page in letters two inches high was blazoned the news of the tragedy.

"Son Held in Death of Famous Financier."

Then came full details of the crime—a fantastic story of half truths and glaring errors.

"Brixton's work," mused Jordan. "He must have phoned while I was searching the premises." He looked up. The newsboy was still standing expectantly beside him. In his preoccupation he had forgotten to pay him. Thrusting his hand into his pocket for a coin, he brought with it the two bullets he had removed from the walls. His jaw squared and his eyes flashed ominously behind his spectacles. He stepped back into the drugstore, and was soon scanning the pages of the city directory.

Fifteen minutes later he rang the doorbell of a modest brick dwelling on Girard street. A frightened domestic answered the ring.

"How many lodgers have you?"

"Only one gen'man, sah."

The man revealed his badge to the excited eyes of the colored girl. "Show me to his room," he ordered.

"Yes, sah; yes, sah," came the frightened reply.

Jordan lost no time in his search. From an examination of the dresser he turned his attention to a large wardrobe trunk in the corner of the room. It was locked. After several trials of a bunch of oddly shaped keys, he found one that turned in the lock. As he swung the trunk open a suit of clothes that had evidently been hurriedly jammed into it fell to the floor with a thud. In the left-hand coat pocket was a .22 calibre automatic, one chamber of which was empty. He slipped the gun into his pocket and turned his attention to a writing-table in the centre of the room. The single drawer revealed a jumbled mass of letters and a score of unpaid bills. These he set aside and delved deeper into the collection. Finally he brought to light several printed blue slips, which he folded and placed in his pocket.

Half an hour later found him in his own room overlooking Thomas Circle. He switched on a powerful light above his desk and remained for several minutes studying strands of hair through his microscope. Feeling confident that his chain of evidence was complete, he descended to the street and boarded a Navy Yard car.

For fully half an hour he was closeted with the chief of police. When he left that astonished official had agreed to carry out every suggestion he had made.

It was close on to three o'clock in the afternoon when Jordan entered the Claxton grounds again. A crowd of curious people had assembled as near the mansion as the police would permit. A cordon of bluecoats had been thrown about the grounds. The officer at the entrance bowed respectfully as he recognized the great detective, and Jordan hastened into the house.

As he entered the library Brixton stepped hurriedly to his side, a look of embarrassment on his face.

"Sorry, old man," he whispered. "You were right, as usual. I hope you'll pardon my interference with your plans. The chief called up a little while ago. Whatever you say goes. That young fellow by the door is Kenneth. Just arrived from New York."

"All right, Brixton," was the low reply. "Perhaps I should have taken you more into my confidence. I presume that's Mrs. Claxton seated yonder by her brother?"

"Exactly," replied Brixton.

Suddenly Jordan stepped to the centre of the room. All eyes were riveted upon him.

"In a few moments," he began, "I will name the murderer of Jonathan Claxton."

An awed silence fell upon the group. Jordan's eyes, glittering behind his glasses, held them all as if in a trance. The nervous strain became almost unendurable. Somewhere a door banged to with a hollow sound.

Finally Mrs. Claxton broke the silence.

"For heaven's sake," she cried, "whom do you accuse of the crime?"

Jordan glanced quickly at the distraught woman. For the fraction of a second his eyes softened. Then a hard glint replaced the look of compassion.

"This is a most unusual case, sergeant," he continued. "You will pardon me if I say that you acted somewhat hastily in ordering the arrest of Kenneth for the murder of his father. When you saw the note with its despairing appeal for money you jumped to the conclusion that the request had been denied, that a quarrel ensued and that the tragedy was the result of that quarrel. Yet, if you had prosecuted your search further, you would have found, as I did, that Mr. Claxton met the appeal of his son, in proof of which you will find in the right-hand drawer of his desk a check-book containing a stub of a check dated the day of the murder for the sum of five thousand dollars in favor of his son.

"That the motive for the murder was robbery is superficially true. That the gems were actually stolen is a fact which I will prove."

"Good Lord!" interrupted Brixton. "What are you driving at? The gems are here before us."

"Paste!" was the laconic reply. "Nothing but paste."

A murmur of incredulity passed around the circle.

"At the present moment," he went on, "the original gems are safe in the hands of the Chief of Police. Sergeant Brixton," he cried, leveling an accusing finger at Lonsdale, "arrest that man for the murder of Jonathan Claxton."

There was a shriek and Mrs. Claxton toppled over in a swoon. Lonsdale sprang to his feet.

"Your're a fool!" he shouted. "You have no proof!"

In the stillness that ensued two officers stepped forward and adjusted steel bracelets on Lonsdale's wrists.

"Now," went on Jordan, "I will explain what led Mr. Lonsdale to take the life of his brother-in-law." Reaching into an inner pocket of his coat he withdrew several letters. "It would take too long," he continued, "to read these. They will, however, be placed in the hands of the proper authorities as evidence. As they show, it is the old story: loss at cards, stolen funds —the prospect of a long term in prison. Relying upon his sister's generosity, Lonsdale appealed to her for aid. She had helped him out repeatedly in a financial way, contrary to the advice of her husband; but finally she rebelled. Driven to desperation, he conceived the plan of having paste replicas made and substituting them for the original gems. To make the substitution would be a comparatively simple matter for one in his position; but if Mr. Claxton discovered the fraud he knew he could expect no mercy. He had accomplished his purpose, pawned the jewels and obtained the money he needed to cover up his defalcations, when he learned that Mr. Claxton was to return from New York. His only avenue of safety lay in the death of his brother-in-law. But he needed an accomplice. The butler proved a welcome ally. I recognized him at once as an escaped convict. His references were forgeries. Things worked out smoothly. Lonsdale invited himself to dinner. Mrs. Claxton had retired to her room. Pleading an engagement, Lonsdale left the dining-room, but he did not leave the house. Knowing his brother-in-law's custom of enjoying an after-dinner cigar in the library, he concealed himself in the dark hallway. He heard the maid descending the stairs. He waited until she had entered the darkened hallway. She attempted to scream, but he smothered her cry and held a drugged cloth over her face. She became unconscious, but not before she had bitten into his hand." Jordan stopped for a moment. "Brixton," he continued, "hold up Lonsdale's right hand." There they were, the imprints of the maid's teeth.

Every one looked towards Lonsdale. He had slumped down in despair as Jordan revealed the working of his mind. His assumption of bravado had left him.

"Then," went on the inexorable voice of Jordan, "he left the maid on the floor in the

hallway, threw the electric switch, which enveloped the house in darkness, and stepped to the library door. Claxton's lighted cigar proved an easy target in the darkened room. Lonsdale fired one shot. In the meantime his accomplice had transferred the maid's inert body to the basement room."

"That's very fine," sneered Lonsdale, "but you can't convict any one on such evidence."

Without replying Jordan removed several articles from his pocket and spread them on the desk before him.

"This," he began, as he held up the larger of the bullets, "is the bullet which caused Mr. Claxton's death. It is of .38 calibre, and fits this gun, which is the property of Mr. Lonsdale. This bullet," he went on, "is of .22 calibre, and was fired at the fleeing form of Lonsdale by his sister, which is proof positive that she did not recognize the murderer as her brother. The bullet grazed his head and carried with it into the framework of the door a few strands of his hair, which I have examined under a microscope. As you know, Brixton, the hairs of different people are as distinguishable from each other as are their fingerprints. They may be fine, medium or coarse, oval in shape or round. My examination of the hairs on the bullet showed them to be of the same color and texture as those of Mr. Lonsdale, a sample of whose hair I obtained from his hairbrush." He glanced quickly at Lonsdale as he spoke. The latter sprang to his feet.

"Your finely forged chain of evidence shall never be used against me," he cried, as he fumbled in his vest pocket with his manacled hands.

"Quick, Sergeant!" thundered Jordan. "Stop him!"

But Brixton was too late. Lonsdale sank to the floor with a groan. Snatching up the vial that had rolled across the floor, Brixton looked at it and uttered one word—"Strychnin!"

"He was right, Brixton," was Jordan's parting remark. "The evidence will never be used against him."

VOODOO CHARMS

A SERIES of recipes and prescriptions with cabalistic incantations and voodoo practice whereby a toothache might be cured, fire extinguished without the aid of water, and enemies made to vanish, were found by police in the room on Walnut street, Newark, N. J., in which Parker C. Wescott, negro, had been living. He is in jail at Arlington on a charge of burglary.

The police found a number of prayers written by Wescott in which he invoked divine aid in flowery phrases. The prayers, recipes and prescriptions were all typewritten. A typewriter was found in the room. Letters found by the police indicated that the negro did an extensive business selling these queer instructions at prices ranging from 50 cents to $10 each.

"How to make yourself shotproof," sold for $5 and directed the purchaser: "In June, on St. Peter and St. Paul's Day, dig blue waywort roots 15 minutes before 12 o'clock; also procure the heart of the plant and carry it with you, and all ropes, fetters and locks will spring open. Neither can you be shot."

The recipe for curing a toothache sold for $1 and is more complicated: "Quosum sinioba zenni tantum lect vent—hang these words on a string over the back of the person with a toothache and they will be speedily relieved."

"The art of extinguishing fire without the aid of water" was obtained for $1. "Inscribe the following letters on each side of a plate and throw it into the fire and forthwith the fire will be extinguished: Arepo tenet opera rotaas."

Caught in His Own Trap

A STRANGE story came up from Mexico some time ago, which at first blush seemed to have something sensational about it, but which on investigation turned out to be true. For some time a certain Mexican Railway had been annoyed almost beyond endurance by freight robbers. Scarcely a freight train passed down the road laden with American merchandise but at some point or other on the route several freight cars were broken open and part of the contents abstracted. The utmost vigilance had failed to detect any of the perpetrators or catch them in the act, and the depredations became at last so bold and numerous that the management reluctantly came to the conclusion that its own employees must have a hand in them, for no ordinary Mexican peon could possibly have had the boldness, adroitness and the executive ability to commit these robberies.

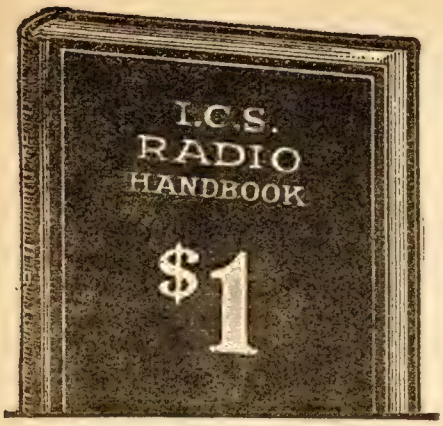
The manager accordingly wrote to Pinkerton's detective agency to send one of their bravest and most wide-awake men, which was done. When the detective arrived Superintendent Mackenzie installed him as an ordinary brakeman on one of the principal freight trains. After working a few days and getting the lay of the land, the Pinkerton man insinuatingly approached two of the company's freight conductors, who had for some reason fallen under the ban of suspicion, but against whom nothing tangible could be brought forward, and proposed to them that they should join him in an extensive freight robbery and divide the proceeds. The conductors evidently suspected the trap that was being laid for them, and, with a show of willingness to accede to the plot, they requested time to study it and talk it over; but, instead of doing so, they quietly went to the Jefe Politico of the city where the train happened to be lying, and acquainted him with the nefarious offer that had been made to them.

The Jefe directed them to pretend acquiescence in the conspiracy and to assist the brakeman in the proposed burglary, so as to have indubitable proof against him, and he would see to the remainder. This was done by the conductors, who planned an extensive haul for the coming night, in the midst of which the Jefe made his appearance with an armed force and caught all three with the plundered freight in their possession. They were marched off to prison, and the next day at a preliminary trial the two conductors gave their testimony, and were released at the regular trial shortly after. Before the judge of the criminal court the Pinkerton brakeman was found guilty and sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment in a penal settlement in Yucatan.

Meanwhile Superintendent Mackenzie had heard of the occurrence and sped in hot haste to Silao to get his Pinkerton out of the scrape. He laid all the circumstances of the case before the judge and requested the detective's release, but met with very poor comfort.

"No," said the judge, "if all what you tell me is true, this man has been guilty of a conspiracy, trying to encompass the ruin of two innocent men, and I can perceive no mitigating circumstance in anything you say. He will have to go to Yucatan. If I were to do my whole duty I would arrest you on the spot and have you tried for participating in the conspiracy. I shall most certainly do so the next time you try anything of the kind."

The Pinkerton man is already in Yucatan, and it will take all the influence which the Mexican railroad is able to bring to bear to procure for him an executive pardon. If he should be pardoned and strike Chicago once more, it is safe to say that no promise of big pay for professional services will ever lure him again to the land of "God and Liberty."



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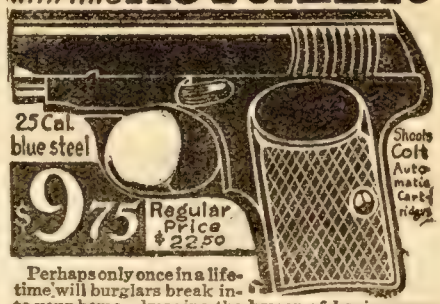

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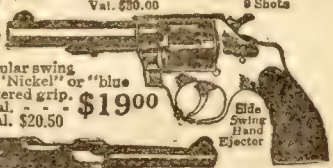

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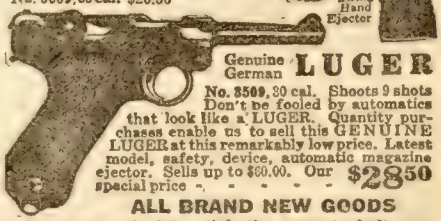

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1 "The Eel Man," by Robert Carlton Brown.
2 "Zitana of Maison Rouge," by F. W. Doughty.
3 "The Mysterious Web," by Armstrong Perry.
4 "Under the Hypnotic Spell," by Dr. H. Enton.
5 "The Silken Sheath," by Crittenden Marriott.
6 "A Fortune Teller's Secret," by Gladys Hall.
7 "The Mystic Emblem," by Marie Coolidge Rask.
8 "The Cards of Fate," by William Goode.
9 "Mr. Bachellor's Apartments," by W. H. Osborne.
10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by C. F. Oursler.
13 "Under a Mask," By Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by C. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by R. Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29 "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith S. Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by B. Poynter
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieut. Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by Wm. H. Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Chas. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura R. Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by William H. Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by E. Rosemon
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by Wm. H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by C. F. Oursler.
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65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
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99 "The Cross," by W. S. Ingram.
100 "The Secret Service Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie and Elliot Balestier.
101 "A Crimson Price," by Elliott Lester.
102 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by G. Jacobs.
103 "A Museum Mystery," by Jack Bechdolt.
104 "The Little Red Book," by J. Alexander Young.
105 "A Man from Siam," by Chas. F. Oursler.
106 "The Clue of the Emerald Ring," by B. Poynter.
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110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. F. Oursler.
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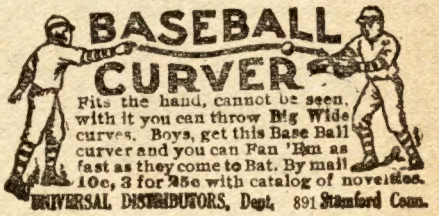

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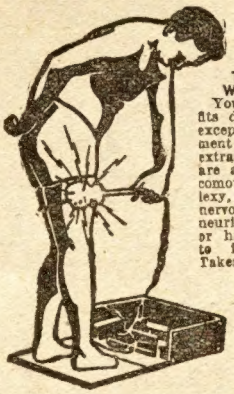

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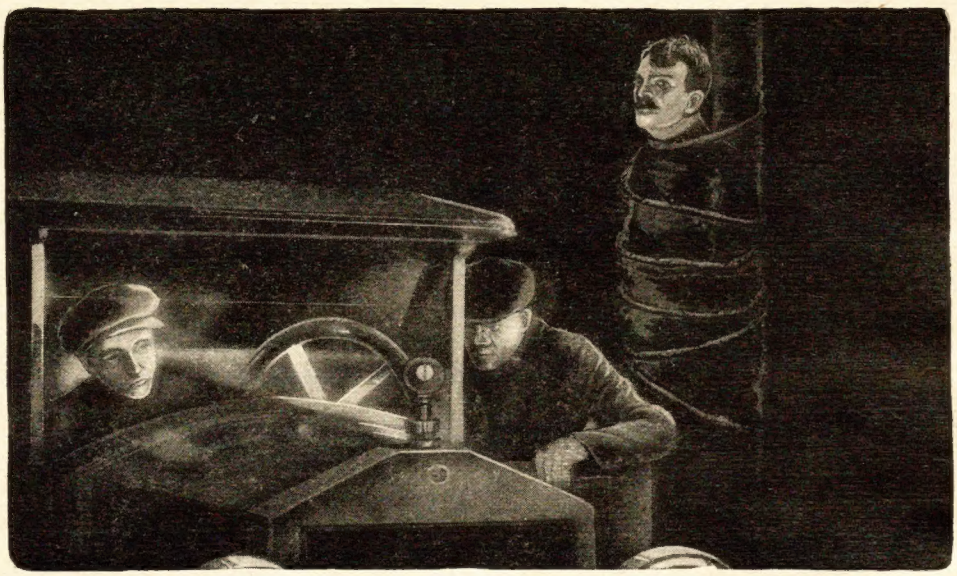

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